

CHA-CHA ON TRACK? ■ CHIKKA: THE NEW MULTINATIONAL

NEWSBREAK

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We Make Sense of the News

OCTOBER 9, 2006 Php75



NO TO CAN THEY SMOKING SHAKE OFF AN ADDITION?

PLUS

LUCIO TAN'S SIN
SHOULD BISHOPS JOIN GOVERNMENT?
OVERDUE REFORMS IN NURSING
PALPARAN'S SUCCESSOR
EGYPT'S SECRET FILIPINA NANNIES
HISTORY FOR TOURISTS

RICA PERALEJO
AND AMANDA GRIFFIN

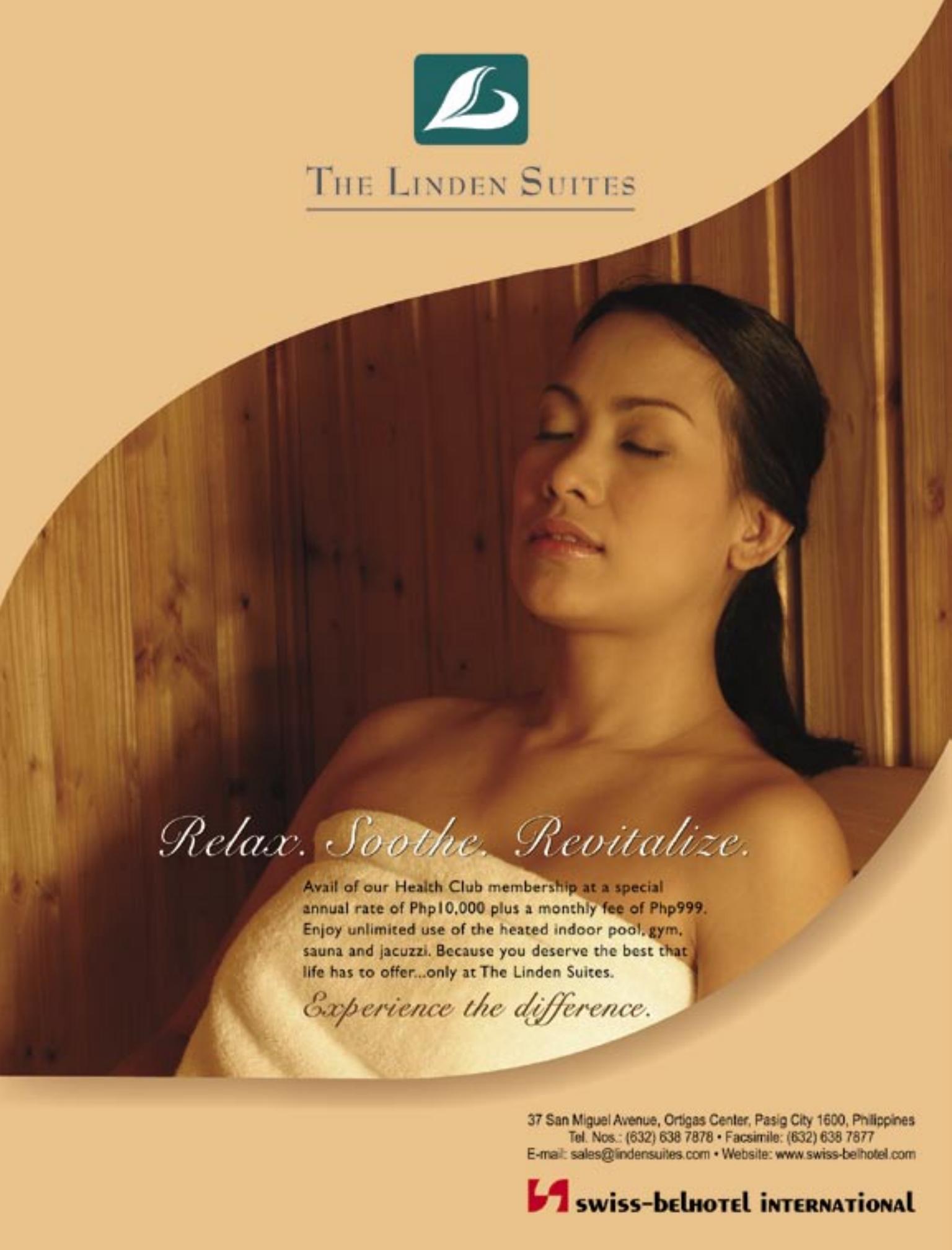
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■ DEAR READER ■

Divisive Leadership

BY HAPPENSTANCE, four of our stories in this issue highlight a common theme: President Arroyo's brand of leadership. From managing politics to disaster, what emerges is a picture of a President who encourages division and a scattershot approach to issues.

The administration supports parallel moves to amend the Constitution—through people's initiative or a constituent assembly—both of which are legally questionable ("A Rushing Train," page 11). In Guimaras, three layers of task forces are in charge of managing the oil spill making the process as murky as the blackened waters ("Task Force Special," page 12).

In addressing extra-judicial killings, Malacañang asked a bishop to join the Melo Commission but failed to get its first choice. It settled for another bishop. This, too, reflects divisions in the Catholic Church, both in the bishops' political sentiments and their stand on joining government bodies ("Should the Clergy Join Government?" page 8).

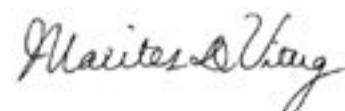
And in the military, the successor of the controversial Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan is someone known for a different approach in fighting the communist rebels. For Brig. Gen. Juanito Gomez, killing is not the essence of counterinsurgency (Hot Seat, page 13). President Arroyo praised both of these officers during her state-of-the-nation address, sending mixed signals.

We will surely see more of the same leadership style, resulting in a schizophrenic or splintered government. Without doubt, this kind of leadership weakens institutions.

That's what we're seeing in the tobacco control sector, the subject of our cover stories (pages 18 to 25). A conspiracy of factors has made the Philippines a haven for tobacco companies: a flawed anti-smoking law, strong industry lobby, lack of support from government, and a weak consumer movement.

To dramatize the split-leadership of President Arroyo: months after she signed the tobacco control law in 2003, the President inaugurated Philip Morris's manufacturing plant in Batangas, touted to be the most modern in Asia.

We rest our case.



You can reach Marites Dañgulan Vitug at: marites@newsbreak.com.ph

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ABOUT THE COVER: Celebrities Rica Peralejo and Amanda Griffin are trying to quit smoking. Photograph by Luis Liwanag. Make-up artist: Noel Ducanes, Strands Lifestyle Salon and Spa



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The tourist market for historical museums is growing in Southeast Asia.



in social work as well, such as housebuilding for Gawad Kalinga and Habitat for Humanity, and providing aid to disaster victims in Mt. Pinatubo and Infanta, Quezon.

To nurture spirituality, places of worship for both Catholics and Muslims have been provided in the Shopping Center. The center currently has The Chapel of the Holy Family, a Muslim Prayer Room, and the dioramas depicting the Nativity of our Lord and the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

Knowing that the study of the heritage of a people, their history, culture and art provides solid footing from which to move forward, OCLP, through the Ortigas Foundation Library, aims to encourage and assist scholars and institutions in researching and conserving our nation's cultural artifacts.

Established with the acquisition of the Netzorg Filipiniana Collection from Cellar Books in Detroit, Michigan, and the personal reference library of the late eminent historian Dr. Gregorio F. Zaide, the library now houses over 16,000 books, periodicals, graduate theses, manuscripts, photographs, maps and loose documents relating to Philippine history.

Included in the collection is the complete set of records of the Japanese war crimes and trials and original newspapers, magazines, and photographs from the war years; Philippine history expert Morton "Jock" Netzorg's comprehensive set of reference material on the Second World War in the Philippines; and Dr. Zaide's extensive collection of books and articles about Dr. Jose Rizal.

"We know that the efforts of our foundation are small and are not enough to change the statistics and improve the Filipino's quality of life," said Drilon. "But we hope that through our single tiny flicker added to yours, we will be able to light up the flame for community service and nation building in the hearts of the people."

Ortigas Foundation: Lighting a Candle

Statistics paint a grim picture of our country. Based on the United Nations Human Development Index, the Philippines ranks 83rd out of 177 countries in terms of quality of life.

Judging from these figures, the future may seem bleak. But with companies like the Ortigas & Company Limited Partnership (OCLP), it should not be.

"We are trying to light a candle that will spark involvement and increased participation in good corporate citizenship and social responsibility," said Rex Drilon II, Chief Operating Officer of the OCLP, during the launch of the Ortigas Foundation, Inc. and the Ortigas Foundation Library last February 2006.

"A flicker of light from a candle, however small, can light up the immediate space surrounding it. And at midnight, especially on a moonless night, a single candle can be very bright. We are in one of our darkest nights as a nation and with your candles and ours, we can turn things around," he said.

To address various needs in society, OCLP has made its Greenhills Shopping Center the venue for much of its social work. Free *tiangge* stalls

have been made available to physically challenged entrepreneurs. A band composed of visually-impaired musicians has been a fixture at the Shopping Center for years now.

Continuing this advocacy, the foundation is working to bring to light the need for additional support for health organizations and livelihood assistance for the physically challenged. Their beneficiaries include the Philippine Tuberculosis Society, Training the Trainors for the Disabled, and the Philippine Foundation for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled Inc.

Emphasizing the importance of good education as a foundation for economic development, the Ortigas Foundation is providing a shining

light to the youth of San Juan with its various educational and scholarship programs. The foundation supports the San Juan scholarship program, programs for the White Cross Orphanage, and the St. John the Baptist Parochial School.

Since the concept of the triple bottomline business involves counting environmental costs, along with the economic and the social, the foundation also supports OCLP's initiatives in environmental conservation. In December last year, the Ortigas Park at the Ortigas Center was inaugurated to provide an oasis of nature within our urban environment.

Knowing that any change begins from within, OCLP employees are actively involved



REFORMING THE ARMED FORCES

IMMEDIATELY AFTER NEWSBREAK reported the alleged corruption in the country's peacekeeping operations with the United Nations ("Where Did The Dollars Go?" July 31, 2006), AKBAYAN representatives in Congress filed House Resolution 1313, which directs House committees on good government, national defense and foreign affairs to hold an inquiry on the matter. The inquiry will look into how the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spent the reimbursements that it received for its participation in UN peacekeeping missions in East Timor, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Haiti, in particular, the remittances for the troop cost allowance and Contingent Owned Equipment.

The investigation may result in the filing of formal charges against erring AFP officials by the House committee on good government should the allegations of graft and corruption be proven true.

We hope that the hearing would facilitate the crafting of legislative measures to institutionalize the country's participation in UN peacekeeping activities. Filipino troops should not be put at risk because resources for our country's international humanitarian and peacekeeping engagements go to corruption. The welfare of our soldiers is part of AKBAYAN's security sector reform agenda, which is premised on the professionalization and depoliticization of the AFP and the principles of human rights.

AKBAYAN commends NEWSBREAK for its excellent reporting on the issues surrounding our military institution.

**ANA THERESIA "RISA"
HONTIVEROS-BARAQUEL**
*AKBAYAN Representative
House of Representatives*

TRACING HIS ROOTS

THE ARTICLE "The Lebanese Among Us" (NEWSBREAK, Sept. 11, 2006) by Gemma B. Bagayaua appealed to me very much.

I have only recently started discovering my heritage as I have been raised in Australia since I was eight years old. I was born in Manila in 1973 and have lived a very lost life. I knew I was a Filipino and knew my mother's side of the family but I never knew my father's side. All I knew was the fact that I was born there and I did not get to a good start in life as a kid.

OUR NEW ADDRESS

NEWSBREAK has moved to its new office: Room 1402A, West Tower, Philippine Stock Exchange Center Building, Exchange Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Our telephone numbers are unchanged: 6875523 and 6875525 – Editorial; 6875528 – fax; 6875521 – Marketing; and 6872255 – Subscription.

deal with such issues. Even in the arena of armed conflict, the government and armed combatants are bound to respect international humanitarian laws.

We also call on the Arroyo administration to reconsider the "all-out war" against insurgent groups that has proven so ineffec-



My mother married an English when I was seven but I have always kept my Hemady name as a reminder that I am a part of that name no matter what. My mother explained that my father was born to a Filipina and a Lebanese (Hemady). I felt that my mother did not know much about my father's background other than the fact that he was Filipino-Lebanese.

I wish that I will get to meet my long lost relatives.

RAYFEL HEMADY
w.r.x.sti@hotmail.com

'PUT AN END TO KILLINGS'

WE CONDEMN the continuing nationwide extra-judicial killings of leaders/activists of legal mass organizations, social development workers, and journalists. We call on the highest authorities of the land to investigate and put an end to these killings that make a mockery of whatever claims the government has as regards the ascendancy of a constitutional rule of law and due process.

Selective killings cannot effectively address political and ideological differences between government and dissenting individuals and legal mass organizations. We must respect laws and legal processes designed to

tual in previous administrations; the same cold warrior strategy has been as feckless in the resolution of armed conflicts in practically all countries. To demonstrate its determination in addressing the problem, the government should make all regional military commanders and provincial police superintendents primarily and directly accountable for any political killing in their respective areas.

THE PHILIPPINE POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

(23 signatories: officers and members)

PETRON'S FAILURE

THANK YOU for the report on the Guimaras oil spill, particularly on Petron's failure to address the issue on an emotional level (NEWSBREAK, Sept. 25, 2006). With people losing their livelihood and their precious marine resources overnight, being legalistic about it was not the right response. It is true, as a journalist, I, too, am skeptical about CSR and can only point to Petron as the best example of one company's failure to 'walk the talk.'

My small group which has been trying to raise public awareness on the tragedy in Guimaras, in an effort to channel resources to the province, salutes your magazine for these informative articles.

STELLA ARNALDO
sludge.wordpress.com

HAWK EYES

THE NAME of the company that made initial estimates of the cost of the oil spill to Guimaras is Resources, Environment and Economics Center for Studies Inc. (NEWSBREAK, Sept. 25, 2006). We misspelled it. Sorry.



LUIS LIWANAG

THE 'BOILED FROG' SYNDROME

At the core of the debate on the nursing exam is values. Is cheating acceptable or not?

By ANNABELLE R. BORROMEO

THE NURSING exam leakage issue has polarized the nursing profession and the country as the controversy continues to unfold. This is another case of how a seemingly small and innocuous act can lead down a slippery slope and smear the image of the nursing profession and even the entire country. What has taken years to build is now tarnished by a single act.

The real issue, however, is not about numbers, or whether those who supposedly passed the test should retake it or not—although this issue must necessarily be confronted. The bigger and greater issue is really values, which lies at the core of this debate. Is cheating acceptable or not?

A friend of mine recounted a recent incident which happened in the airport during one of his trips. He was seated beside a nursing graduate who told him that she had reviewed at a certain review center. When asked why she chose that review center, her reply was, "Because they have leakage questions there."

A recent informal poll conducted among

nursing graduates required them to complete the following statement: Cheating is: (a) wrong under any circumstance; (b) wrong only if one is caught; (c) right in certain cases; (d) right because everyone does it. The overwhelming response was "right because everyone does it."

We are literally in the midst of a "boiled frog" situation. It is said that if you throw a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will jump out immediately. But if you place a frog into a pot of lukewarm water and slowly turn up the heat, it will boil to death.

How does this happen? As the water gets warmer, the frog floats quite placidly at first, constantly adjusting its body temperature, and then eventually sinks into a tranquil stupor. Before long, with a smile on its face and without resistance, it allows itself to be boiled to death!

Collectively, nursing students and nursing professionals can liken ourselves to the frog. We are literally sitting in a pot of water on a stove, with the heat gradually being turned up. The heat represents vested interests—political, business, or any other—threatening to slowly boil us to death.

The next steps the profession takes will decide its future. This issue presents a clear opportunity to institute necessary and overdue reforms in the nursing profession and how it is regulated.

WE HAVE A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY TO INSTITUTE OVERDUE REFORMS IN THE NURSING PROFESSION AND HOW IT IS REGULATED

In the area of nursing regulation, the following are much-needed reforms:

- Nursing leaders and members of Congress should work together to review the Nursing Act of 2004 (Republic Act 9173), specifically how nominations for the Board of Nursing (BON) members are generated. At present, the president of the Philippine Nurses Association is solely empowered to nominate candidates. Nominations should come from all sources and the screening process has to be tightened.

- The Professional Regulation Commission should tighten its screening for prospective BON members to avoid conflict of interest.

- Review centers must be regulated (they are not at present) and be so regulated by a body other than the Commission on Higher Education. The latter has been largely ineffective in closing down substandard schools.

- The salary scale and working conditions of BON members must be upgraded so that they are less prone to corrupt practices.

- The BON should tap writers from all over the Philippines with known competencies in writing reliable and valid questions. A large test pool of questions, reviewed for religious or cultural bias, and appropriately referenced, should be developed and maintained.

Other issues should be resolved as well. For one, those who are guilty must be punished. And do we really need review centers for the National Licensure Exam? The responsibility for ensuring that the graduates pass should be put squarely back on the shoulders of the nursing schools that produced them.

The practice of letting the reviewees memorize questions from the board examination and then sharing these questions with the review center must stop.

Overall, we need to institute a values program in all schools of nursing. We must, once again, talk to our young about doing things right and taking the high road—not the road of expedience and shortcuts—but the road of hard work and excellence.

We must restore our national pride and dignity. Where we stand in matters of challenge and controversy, and not in times of comfort and convenience, is what measures us as a people, says Martin Luther King. Here is one opportunity to reclaim that pride and dignity. We must not waste it!

Let us get out of the water that is slowly heating up lest we get boiled alive. This is our last chance to get out of the pot. ■

.....
The author, a registered nurse with a PhD in nursing, is dean of the Far Eastern University Institute for Nursing.

our pick

DON'T MESS WITH DUTERTE

RODRIGO DUTERTE has been known by so many names, among them "The Punisher," as *Time* described him in 2002. And what a "punisher" he could be.

Ask Samson Macariola, the self-proclaimed anti-terrorism expert who reportedly sneaked in bomb components on a plane bound for Davao and back. He got his public bruising from the angry mayor.

Known for his in-your-face language, Duterte dishes out invectives even over his weekly program on television and radio. He called Macariola "liar" and vowed to slap him if he shows up: "He foisted a lie so the nation would know him at my expense."

"Is he a terrorist or an anti-terrorism expert?" asked Duterte. He said he doesn't even allow the sale and use of firecrackers in the city, "how much more a bomb?...If you bring a bomb here, I will shoot you in public."

Duterte debunked insinuations that he was the government official who tapped Macariola to do the test. Macariola was Duterte's consultant on managing firearms and ammunition services, hired on a monthly salary of P10,400 from July 1 to December 31 this year. The amount excludes representation and travel allowances. But Duterte announced on September 10 that he had terminated the services of Macariola.

National newspapers dubbed Duterte the "presidential adviser on anti-terrorism." How that came to be, nobody knows, not even his closest aides.

What they are certain of is that Duterte was appointed "crisis manager" for Region XI and XII (Southeastern Mindanao and Southwestern Mindanao) shortly after the airport bombing in Davao in March 2003. Malacañang records show he was designated presidential consultant on security and peace and order concerns in 2002.

The "crisis" was over by July 2003, but the presidential appointment has apparently not been revoked. Duterte also remains the chair of the Regional Peace and Order Council of Southeastern Mindanao.

On September 6, Davao City reporters were sent text messages that the mayor would be interviewed live over television by Rev. Apollo C. Quiboloy, the mayor's spiritual adviser. In Quiboloy's program, Duterte said, "The reason why I'm outraged is because some people want me to explain the declaration of this guy (Macariola). We have explained the truth, so he has to explain his lies."

Duterte told reporters he was made to understand the alleged bomb components were made of clay. The mayor said Macariola apologized to him through a text message.

—Carolyn O. Arguillas in Davao/MindaNews



RENE LUMAWAG

SHOULD THE CLERGY JOIN

ON THE same day that President Arroyo announced she was forming a commission to investigate the extra-judicial killings of militant activists, a reporter was able to immediately reach Batanes Bishop Camilo Gregorio. Named as a member of the commission to be headed by former Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo, Gregorio said he was willing to serve "if it is really going to be an investigative body."

But less than 24 hours later, Gregorio was already singing a different tune. He announced he was declining the post because it would interfere with his pastoral obligations in his diocese. What was not known was that Church officials were burning the lines following the President's announcement.



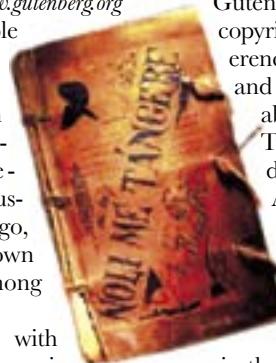
BISHOP CAMILO GREGORIO

Archbishop Oscar Cruz, an Arroyo critic, hastily called up Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo and advised him that Gregorio should not accept the post

FASTER DOWNLOADING OF BOOKS

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The latest with Project Gutenberg is that Smart Communication Inc. is hosting a mirror site that will be available in October. Smart donated the server and bandwidth, and hired Web Philippines Inc. to maintain it.



Check it out next month at www.gutenberg.smartschools.ph.

Why a mirror site? As of August 2006, Project Gutenberg has made 19,000 copyright-free books, reference works, audio files, and music notations available for downloading. Two million e-books are downloaded monthly. At the rate it is going, downloading some titles takes a long time.

"The Smart-sponsored mirror site will enable users in the Philippines and nearby regions to access and download e-books at a faster rate and prevent congestion at the US-based main Project Gutenberg site," says Ramon Isberto, head of Smart's Public Affairs Group.

GOVERNMENT?



BISHOP JUAN DE DIOS PUEBLOS

because the latter could be in breach of a Church law. A doctor of the Catholic Church's canon law, Cruz argued that Church law prohibits clerics from assuming any public office that could involve the exercise

of civil power.

The Melo Commission, which has been empowered to issue subpoenas and move for the prosecution of culpable persons, clearly enjoys civil powers, Cruz pointed out.

It appears that Lagdameo was able to prevail upon Gregorio to reconsider. The Palace quickly named Butuan Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos as replacement. De Dios Pueblos agreed.

The contrasting decisions expose the division among the bishops. It also shows the conflicting opinions of bishops on taking an overt role in government.

In his blog, Cruz says Church officials can assume quasi-judicial positions as in the case of the Bastes Commission chaired by Sorsogon Bishop Arturo Bastes. It was tasked to look into the Rapu-Rapu mining operations in Albay. Cruz argues that unlike the Melo Commission, the Bastes Commission was

"purely advisory in nature" and did not have civil powers.

While canon law bans clerics from assuming offices with civil powers, the Vatican can make exemptions "for reasonable and just cause." Once granted, the cleric concerned is dismissed from clergy duties.

In the case of De Dios Pueblos, it appears he has not sought Vatican permission since he remains an active bishop. De Dios Pueblos says he has asked the opinion of other bishops and was told the post was not in conflict with canon law because it is temporary.

Some Church people say De Dios Pueblos has put the Church in a tight spot. A finding by the Melo Commission that the government does not have a hand in the killings can be interpreted as having the Church's imprimatur because of De Dios Pueblos' membership in the panel. "Why drag the Church into this controversy?" a Church adviser asks.

—Aries Rufo

And they said...

"I think it was seduction. I don't think they're guilty. Not a bit."

JAMES REUTER, S.J.

on the alleged rape by US Marines of a Filipina



LUIS LIWAG

OKS—FOR FREE

The mirror site was also intended for the use of the telecom company's CSR effort, Smart Schools Program, which provides broadband connections to select schools and training for its teachers. "We hope that our Smart schools will take advantage of Project Gutenberg," Isberto says.

Filipino content is still scarce in Project Gutenberg, however, and in the Web in general. Project Gutenberg's catalog only has 70 books from the Philippines so far. Apart from Rizal's *El Filibusterismo* and *Noli Me Tangere*, Internet-connected schools can save their funds in buying books like *Doctrina Christiana*, *Ibong Adarna*, Francisco Balagtas's *Florante at Laura*, Modesto de Castro's *Pagsusulatan nang Dalauang Binibini na si Urbana at*

si Feliza, and Rosauro Almario's *Ang Mananayaw*.

Nevertheless, Project Gutenberg regularly uploads more books at the rate of two giga-

bytes a day. If the copyright-free title you're looking for isn't available today, check it again tomorrow. You'll never know.

—Carmela Fonbuena

"I really cannot understand why they are so ungrateful. When they came to me, I helped them. Why is he doing this to us?"

First Gentleman JOSE MIGUEL ARROYO

*on
Rep. Allan Peter Cayetano*

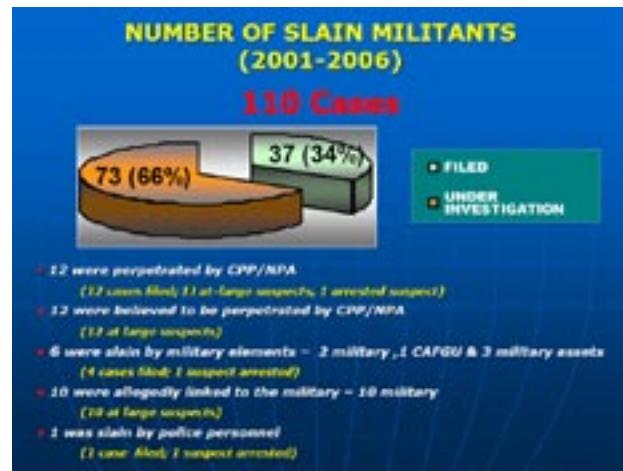
"Our government is weak. Anarchy has come."

FOWZEA OLOMI, women's rights activist in Afghanistan on the Taliban resurgence

"The expectations are high and there is no room for failure."

BRIG. GEN. BENJAMIN DOLORFINO, on his new assignment as head of the NCR command

MIXED PICTURE



Source: Task Force Usig



NOT JUST THE U.S.

ONE MARKED change in the Philippines after 9/11 is the expansion of security relations with countries outside the United States. The defense department, in a significant move, offered a template status-of-forces agreement (SOFA) to ASEAN countries and Australia. If approved, this means that, among others, our armed forces will be conducting military exercises with those of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Brunei.

Talks are ongoing with these neighbors but the more active negotiations are with Australia. NEWSBREAK obtained an early draft of the proposed 15-page agreement with Australia "concerning the status of defense and armed forces personnel." Here are some highlights:

Annex I Rights and Facilities

Movement of Forces, Vessels, Aircraft and Motor Vehicles

- The sending state, in compliance with the port regulations or other laws of the receiving state, can pass explosives (including ammunition) through the ports of the receiving state and transport them to any place and move them to any extent reasonably necessary within the receiving state.

- The sending state shall pay compensation to the port authorities and to the receiving state for any damage to the property of...the receiving state...resulting from any explosions.

Abuse of Privilege

- The sending state shall cooperate with and render assistance to the receiving state to prevent any abuse or misuse of the privileges.

Annex 2 Status of Forces

Criminal Jurisdiction

- The sending state shall have the right to exercise within the receiving state all criminal and disciplinary jurisdiction conferred on them by the law of the sending state.

- The receiving state shall have jurisdiction over the members of the visiting force with respect to offenses committed within the receiving state and punishable by law of the receiving state.

- The sending state shall have the right to exclusive jurisdiction over members of the visiting force with respect to offenses punishable by the laws of the sending state but not by the laws of the receiving state.

—Marites Dañgulian Vitug

Off Duty

THE WORLD DOESN'T HAVE A SUPERMAN

That's why even supposedly fearless journalists have to take precautions

By MIRIAM GRACE A. GO

I HAVE a lot of issues with Lois Lane in *Superman Returns*, all of them about why she always does things that journalists wouldn't. And I'm not even talking about "fearless" journalists but just the ones with a little common sense.

Let me take up the one that nearly made me walk out of the theater in incredulity.

Donning an evening gown, she picks up her five-year-old son from school on her way to a dinner interview. She stops by a mansion she's been wanting to visit for a story she's pursuing. She tells her son that they won't take long and will ask just a few questions. But she notices a boat docked nearby, from where she hears loud classical music playing. She drags her son to the boat—after she decides to leave her mobile phone in her car.

The boat belongs to Lex Luthor, Superman's arch-enemy, also a criminal she used to trail. Luthor, who was acquitted of a well-publicized charge without snoopy Lois Lane even hearing about it, naturally takes mother and son hostage.

Isn't she, uhm, stupid? Nobody brings along a child to sensitive or potentially dangerous coverage. Likewise, being a journalist doesn't give one the license to barge into anybody's private space in the name of public interest.

We, at NEWSBREAK, are aware that in doing our work—we uncover stolen public money, we expose lopsided deals—we could ruffle feathers or step on toes. In helping promote honesty and transparency, we call attention to corrupt public officials. At times, our lives are in danger and we know that we, along with our families, might be watched.

Thus, we take extra precautions. When we were investigating cheating in the 2004 presidential elections, the wiretap of the President, the warring power blocs exploiting the gold of Diwalwal, the overlapping business and government networks of Luis "Chavit" Singson, and

the *jueteng* politics of Armand Sanchez, we found out that our office and mobile phones were bugged.

Our managing editor received a funeral wreath in her house. She was tailed by another car on her way home. There were even unusual inquiries on the editorial phones about the delivery schedule of the magazine's copies!

Editors had constantly reminded the staff about being conscious of security and we underwent a seminar on keeping safe.

In *The Manila Times* years back, my editors shared three simple safety tips: When covering rallies, make sure you have a wet handkerchief to protect your eyes, nose, and face when tear gas is lobbed. Turn your backpack into a "frontpack" because when rallyists are being dispersed, cops won't distinguish reporters from demonstrators and a backpack will make it easier for cops to grab you. Change routes to and from work and home so government agents will have a hard time monitoring you.

A decade later, we are reminded that we constantly face danger. Untrained household help might unwittingly reveal to callers travel plans or school schedules of children. Thus, if one can't train helpers to answer the phone, it is better to install an answering machine and a caller ID device.

Take notice—are there suddenly too many *taho* vendors and other hawkers frequenting your neighborhood? They could be spies. Practice the buddy system for sensitive coverage. If you have to be by yourself, make sure your editors know where and when you're meeting a particular person. Second mobile phones whose numbers are known only to a few could come in handy.

But at the end of the day, no story is worth one's life. I'm taking it from the security guy: "You can always go away and take it up later. If somebody else gets it, it wasn't meant for you; at least you're still alive to appreciate it." ■



A RUSHING TRAIN

The administration eyes parliamentary elections or Charter change plebiscite in May 2007

By MIRIAM GRACE A. GO

THE SCARCITY of administration bets in the top voters' picks for senators in recent surveys and efforts to amend the Constitution appear to be related. If Malacañang's timetable will be realized—as it has been, so far—there will be no national election in May 2007, just contests for local positions and a plebiscite for a new Constitution.

The President's adviser for political affairs, Gabriel Claudio, tells NEWSBREAK that there are 30 names on the administration's list of senatorial aspirants, but they are not being announced because they are confident there will be no senatorial elections in 2007—unlike the opposition that has set its eyes on the senatorial polls.

The ruling coalition is instead strengthening its political machinery at the local level. If they succeed in the consolidation work, they may have a sweep of the gubernatorial, mayoral, and parliamentary elections. If the shift is not realized, however, Claudio says, "It's still the local machinery that will make the senatorial candidates win."

To change the presidential government into a unicameral parliament in less than a year, the administration is looking at two modes: a people's initiative (PI), a petition for it being deliberated on by the Supreme Court (SC); and a constituent assembly (CA), efforts for it being derailed by the Senate's refusal to sit with the House of Representatives.

Claudio says that "from the beginning, our minds have been closed to the CONCON (constitutional convention) mode." He cites the oft-repeated arguments about an elected CONCON being costly, lacking a timetable, and not ensuring the election of qualified delegates.

In August, the Palace-backed Sigaw ng Bayan Movement and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP) filed a PI petition with the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to amend the Constitution. The groups are calling for a shift in the form of government. The petition was accompanied by about eight million signatures of registered voters,

more than 6.3 million of which were allegedly verified by local election offices.

The COMELEC, however, dismissed the petition, citing the SC decision in 1997 declaring Republic Act 6735, the enabling law for initiatives and referenda, as inadequate to introduce changes in the Constitution. Sigaw and ULAP brought their petition to the SC. Critics of Charter change filed their intervention with the SC, which is scheduled to decide no later than October 20.

In a parallel effort, administration congressmen have threatened to force a constituent assembly. Senators have refused to convene a CA with the House of Representatives, and even passed a resolution on March 21, saying the Senate has to vote separately from the House.

Senators maintain that for a CA to push through, the two chambers of Congress should approve it separately, each by at least a three-fourths vote. Most people in the administration say that the two chambers can

vote as one (or one vote per lawmaker), and that the three-fourths vote needed can be provided by congressmen.

Claudio says that the Senate resolution provided a "deadend" to the "ideal way" of convening a CA. He sides with the congressmen, however, that a separate vote by the Senate and the House "is not the exclusive interpretation" of the three-fourths vote.

He says that Charter change advocates are pinning their hopes more on a PI. The "ideal timetable" is for the SC to "clear all legal doubts" over RA 6735 by late October, for the COMELEC to hold a plebiscite for the proposed shift to a unicameral parliament by December, and for the interim parliament composed of the present set of senators and congressmen to be in place by January 2007.

The unicameral parliament is not expected to take long to deliberate on what other parts of the Constitution they want to rewrite, he says, because "there is the Jaraula report." He is referring to the draft Constitution approved by the House which has met criticism for provisions that could diminish the independence of the judiciary and extend President Arroyo's stay in power.

The May 2007 elections will then be for local and parliamentary positions. The plebiscite for the rest of the constitutional amendments can ride on the exercise, Claudio says.

Other administration sources say they have not given up on the senators because they doubt that the SC will reverse its 1997 decision on the PI law. Allies of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. are exploring ways to either win over the senators to junk their anti-CA resolution or to push through with the House threat to bypass the upper chamber.

There used to be 236 congressmen and 24 senators, so the votes of 195 lawmakers were needed to approve the forming of a CA. The required number could be lower because there are now only 23 senators and 232 congressmen. Congressmen insist all the 191 to 195 votes can come from them, and that the signatures of senators will no longer be needed.

A strategist privy to the game plan of the De Venecia camp says that as far as they are concerned, only four senators are anti-Charter change to the core. The rest can be won over.

According to the strategist, the senators—especially the four who are on their last term, along with the seven seeking reelection—should find the parliamentary setup attractive. De Venecia has said that any of the incumbent senators, having won on a national scale, can easily win as prime minister. ■



BUCK PAGE

TASK FORCE SPECIAL

The handling of the oil spill reflects President Arroyo's leadership style: too many persons call the shots

By TARA KATHERINE YAP in Guimaras

NO ONE saw it coming—that a tanker, carrying over two million liters of bunker fuel, would sink, much more cause environmental, health, and socio-economic hazards that have never been seen in this country before.

The government was caught off-guard. As a result, the management of the oil spill disaster in Guimaras and its neighboring areas has been marked by confusion. It is unclear who really calls the shots as there are too many officials and agencies involved and they operate in a multi-layered organization, including three task forces: Task Force Guimaras (national), Task Force Solar 1 Oil Spill (regional), and Task Force Sunrise (provincial).

The response to Guimaras is similar to the evacuation of Filipinos in Lebanon. Instead of tapping an existing and tested inter-agency crisis management committee, President Arroyo formed a task force headed by the vice president which worked separately from a presidential committee on Middle East preparedness and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The emergencies in Guimaras and Lebanon reflect the leadership style of Ms. Arroyo. Journalists who have covered her say that the President usually forms special bodies to deal with emergencies to show that the national government is responding. The message, they say, is the creation of the task force itself.

During the first week, only the municipality of Nueva Valencia, under Mayor Diosdado Gonzaga, and the regional Coast Guard responded. They handled the rescue operation of the crew of the ill-fated *M/T Solar 1* and notified the concerned private and government agencies.

Gov. JC Rahman Nava, chairman of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC) of Guimaras, then established Task Force Sunrise. With a grassroots setup, from barangay all the way to the provincial level, it has been directly involved in the ground operations, including the cleanup, distribution of relief assistance, monitoring of oil spillage, and construction of improvised spill booms. The ones doing all the real work are under its jurisdiction.

By the second week, chaos kicked in as



BIG THREE: (From left)
Rafael Coscolluela,
President Arroyo, and
Avelino Cruz

more agencies and personalities joined. It was right after President Arroyo directed the creation of Task Force Guimaras, a multi-agency effort under the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) with Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. as chairman. In this setup are six major working committees—technical, logistics and finance, compensation, investigation, policy review, and regional task force.

Then, at the regional level, the Task Force Solar 1 Oil Spill of the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council (RDCC) 6 was formed. It is the coordinating and oversight body with Rafael Coscolluela, President Arroyo's adviser in Western Visayas, as the designated incident commander. "My job involves orchestrating, coordinating, monitoring, and directing," Coscolluela says. "RDCC 6 comes in when the problem extends beyond the locality." The affected areas include the provinces of Iloilo and Negros Occidental. At the same time, he says, he has to implement the decisions of

Task Force Guimaras.

Cruz said in a press briefing that Task Force Guimaras is the decision-making body: "All things discussed must be coursing through Task Force Guimaras and Task Force Guimaras makes the decision."

But it appears that Task Force Sunrise, the response team closest to the casualty, is left in the dark. "As the primary stakeholders, the NDCC and RDCC 6 have to look at our concerns," Nava says, adding that the sunken tanker, cleanup operations, waste management, relief operations, cost of continuing assessment, and the development of a comprehensive rehabilitation plan remain to be Task Force Sunrise's key concerns. While these somewhat match those of NDCC's and RDCC 6's, there has to be a point of integration.

The problem does not only lie in the decision-making process, but also in information dissemination. Officials issue conflicting statements. For instance, Lydia Depra Ramos of the regional Department of Health declared on September 8 that the fumes of the bunker oil "exacerbated" the asthma attack of a two-year-old boy and caused his death. Later, assistant regional director Ed Gonzaga said the boy's death was not related to the oil spill.

Both Cruz and Coscolluela say that to avoid speculations and misinterpretations, they are the only ones authorized to give statements to the media.

A gag order was first imposed on the regional Coast Guard last September 5 after it publicly divulged its recommendation of siphoning the remaining fuel from the tanker without clearance from Cruz or Coscolluela. But Cruz later said that the fuel will indeed be siphoned off.

President Arroyo and her Cabinet have visited Guimaras thrice since the tragedy. But there's been lack of focus on pushing for more efficient strategies to respond to a disaster that she has declared "a national calamity." Among others, this means compelling Petron and Sunshine Maritime Development Corp., the tanker's owner, not only to be legally accountable, but more importantly, to fulfill its moral obligation to provide livelihood to the victims. It also means creating or enhancing existing government protocols in handling oil spills.

The sentiment here is: the stakeholders in Guimaras, Iloilo, and Negros Occidental are the guinea pigs in this trial-and-error experiment. ■

If soldiers are disciplined, we would have already won 50 percent of the war

AMILITARY officer known for his soft approach to counterinsurgency is the new commander of the 7th Infantry Division based in Nueva Ecija. Brig. Gen. Juanito Gomez succeeded the controversial Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan who retired on September 11. Gomez was brigade commander in Bohol where he was successful in defeating the communist insurgents. He spoke to NEWSBREAK's Marites Dañgulan Vitug. Excerpts:

What's your approach to counterinsurgency?

I've adopted a convergence strategy. I work with the people, coordinate with the local government units, and work as part of a team. In Bohol, I was only part of the team led by Gov. Erico Aumentado. The province had a development program anchored on poverty reduction. One of the components is peace and security.

What's the most important factor in your strategy?

There should be focus on what really needs to be done. And there should be harmony within the team.

Should the focus be poverty reduction or winning the war?

The centerpiece should be poverty reduction. The rest are contributory like an improved peace and order situation so that people can move about and do their jobs. There's also local governance, good infrastructure.

As a military officer, is killing the enemies the main point in counterinsurgency?

No, it's not a matter of killing. You first have to show your military might, that you can defeat them (communist guerrillas)

in battle. At the same time, you have to win over the people. You establish your credibility.

What was the first thing you did when you were assigned to Bohol?

First, you have to know and understand the people, know the enemy terrain. I made myself visible by participating in the provincial peace and order council. Mind you, they weren't talking about the insurgency in the council. And when they talked about it, they focused on military abuses.

I assured them that I was going to act on them. I investigated [the complaints] and reported on what action had been taken. This becomes the check and balance in my troops.

If you find out that one of your men committed an abuse, what do you do?

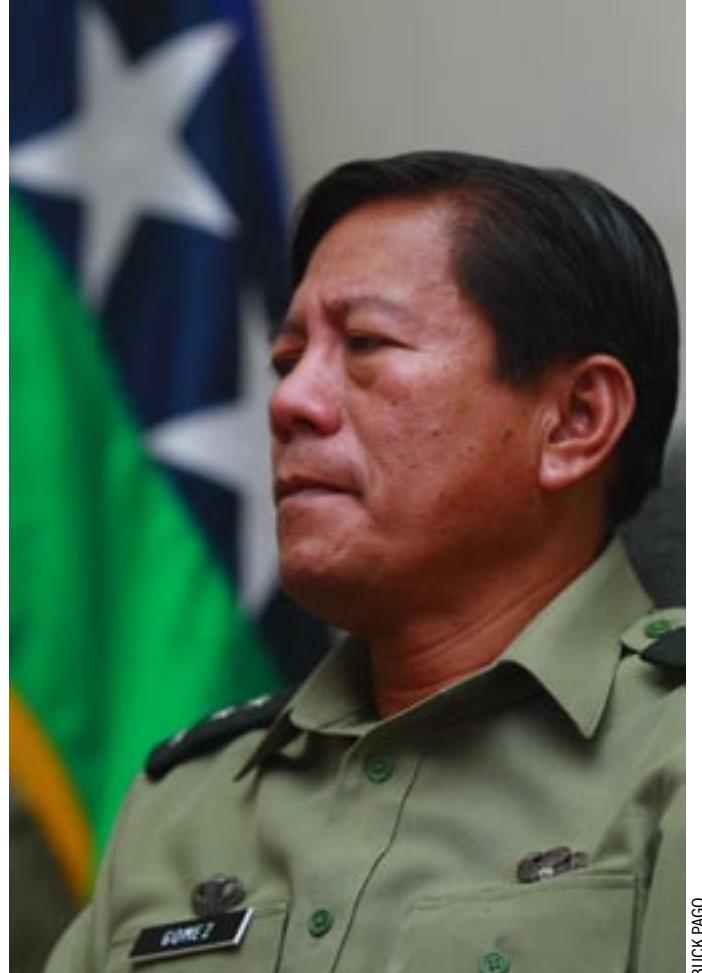
I don't hide it. Instead of making it your weakness, use it as your strength. Show that you do not condone misdemeanors. If you hide it, you will only become a recruiter for the NPA (New People's Army).

You were a deputy commander of General Palparan in Mindoro. Your approaches seem to contrast.

The program there was different. In the first place, I wasn't the commander. In Bohol, I called the shots. But General Palparan and I are like brothers.

Defense Secretary [Avelino] Cruz described your approach as "fresh."

Maybe I was just warm in my approach. If you're close to the people, you can minimize encounters, prevent them.



BUCK PAGO

Did it reach a point when people would give you information on the NPA?

Yes. In fact, we were able to initiate 13 engagements in Bohol as a result of the civilians' support. Most of these were during the first six months of 2004. We won all of these encounters and I lost only one soldier and one civilian volunteer.

Do you have to change the mindset of some of your men?

That should be the number one consideration—internalization—regardless of where I am assigned. I've got to inculcate in the minds of my men that they should be disciplined, dedicated, committed, and capable. If soldiers are disciplined, then we would have already won 50 percent of the war.

Your human intelligence was good?

There was an intelligence fusion, from our intelligence officers, civilian assets, and rebel returnees. Whenever we deployed troops, they were accompanied by competent rebel

returnees. Some are with the CAFGU (Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit), others are employed by the provincial government. We organized a cooperative for them and provided them housing.

Is the lack of an anti-terrorism law an obstacle in counterinsurgency?

If we're confronted with legal front organizations, we recruit their members. Then those who are recruited do the propaganda work. The other side will find it hard to refute [their stories] because they all used to belong to the same organization. That's the most effective way to neutralize the front organizations.

Does it work in the long run—as opposed to killing them?

If you kill one enemy, understand the agony of the mother and the family left behind. If they believe NPA propaganda, for example, that the military tortured the victims, they may also join the movement. But when you neutralize them, word will spread. It will multiply a hundred-fold. ■



A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

The police lack resources—from patrol cars to firearms. But there are out of the box solutions.

By GEMMA B. BAGAYAUA

CONSIDER THIS: you are a policeman in a small town. One of the residents alerts you about a robbery taking place in a barrio several kilometers away. You are all set to respond. Unfortunately, the only vehicle assigned to your police station has conked out. What do you do?

The police have often been ridiculed for failing to respond to crimes as they happen. Many times, however, policemen could not respond because they lack resources. Emmanuel Aranas, chief of the Scene of Crime Operations (soco) unit in the Eastern Police District says, "You can't always blame the policeman."

For instance, the gas ration for their unit's operations amounts to only 40 liters a month—hardly enough to keep Aranas's vehicle running for a whole week. Many police stations do not even have patrol vehicles.

Even the police station in Mandaluyong—one of the relatively better equipped stations in the country—could not supply all its personnel with handheld radios. The en-

tire police organization needs about 25,000 handheld radios. There are only 2,280 units on hand, of which 298 do not work, according to official data.

As of the first quarter of 2004, over 20,000 police personnel (out of about 110,000) did not have their own firearms, a study commissioned by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) says. Even if they do have firearms, policemen complain that they are given only 28 bullets for patrol duty for an entire year.

Only 10 bullets are issued per year for marksmanship training, according to the UNDP study (*see www.newsbreak.com.ph for full text*). Personnel in some police stations even report that no marksmanship training has ever been conducted.

Such inadequacies have a critical effect on police performance. For instance, how does a policeman know that the person in front of him is a wanted man if he has no access to crime information? If a policeman patrols on foot, how can he run after criminals fleeing with a stolen car?

Even if his unit has a patrol vehicle, how can he chase suspects if his service vehicle is

already out of gas? If he has no radio, how does he call on his other colleagues to set up a road block fast enough to catch fleeing bank robbers? How can he hone his shooting skills if he does not have enough bullets for target practice? And how can he shoot properly if he has not been given the opportunity to practice?

On the surface, there seems to be no way out of this predicament which has been crippling the police force for years. Given the current fiscal woes, there is little chance that the budget will grow significantly soon. Practically all government agencies are experiencing similar budgetary constraints.

ONE FIREARM EACH

There appears to be very little room for discretion in the budget of the Philippine National Police (PNP), with close to 90 percent of its P35.5 billion budget already allotted to salaries of its personnel. This leaves roughly 10 percent for maintenance and other operating expenditures.

Barely 1 percent of the annual budget goes to capital outlay, the item used to fund the construction and maintenance of build-

ings as well as the purchase of equipment.

The UNDP study, which covers various facets of the PNP, says that the budget could go a longer way if it were used more effectively within the organization. What is needed are “out of the box” solutions, PNP Deputy Director General for Operations Avelino Razon tells NEWSBREAK.

For instance, on the lack of side arms, Razon says that previously, each policeman was equipped with one long firearm and one short firearm. Long arms are often used by police on guard duty and involved in internal security operations. Short arms are for police on patrol or cops doing intelligence work.

When existing long arms and side arms were inventoried, it was found that the PNP had more firearms than personnel, Razon says. “This meant we are not managing our resources properly.” To ensure that every policeman will have at least one firearm, the program management office decided that, henceforth, all policemen will be issued either a long arm or a sidearm. “So we will all end up with one firearm each.”

The same thing is true with bullets. “It’s a matter of approach,” Razon says. The budget for training is too small to buy enough factory-loaded bullets which cost roughly P30 to P40 each. But factory-loaded bullets are not necessary for training, Razon says. “You only need reloads.” “Reloads” or recycled bullets cost roughly P5 per bullet.

The PNP, too, will be hard put to provide all its policemen with two-way radios that cost P80,000 each. Most policemen, however, already have cell phones, Razon points out, so “you only need to provide them with load credits.”

WELCOME TO THE 21ST CENTURY

With the help of various donor organizations, the PNP seeks to work on programs that will help the organization break through “20th century policing” using advancements in information and communications technology (ict), Razon says.

Such programs, he admits, cannot be as grand as those in developed countries, given meager resources. For instance, in a country that cannot even afford to supply all its policemen with radio units, local police cannot hope to have laptops in every patrol car like their counterparts in the United States.

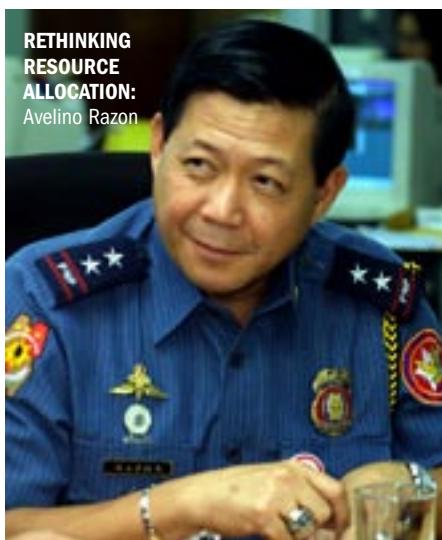
Instead, the PNP intends to make use of short message services (sms) to provide policemen with information they need in a timely manner.

Among others, the ict plan includes the creation of databases such as a Vehicle Identification Monitoring System, which will allow agents of the traffic management

group to identify the owner of, and keep a tab on, a suspicious vehicle.

Another system will help police in the field determine if a firearm is registered and if a person is licensed to carry firearms. The ict database will also include a warrant registry so that police in a particular area can check if a suspicious newcomer is the subject of an outstanding arrest warrant. Once this system is in place, a police station in Tawi-Tawi will have the same capabilities as the one in Makati, Razon says.

The directorate for investigation and detection management is now working on



an e-blotter system that will immediately update crime information in real time. At present, crime reporting is done manually. This has made it prone to manipulation, the UNDP study says.

While some of these proposed ict-powered innovations are still on the PNP’s wish list, some new ideas are already being used by select units within the organization.

For instance, the Joint Anti-Bank Robbery Action Committee (JABRAC) used to meet regularly to discuss findings. Now they don’t have to. They are now using a wiki, an online collaborative publishing tool, which operatives update whenever they come across new information.

The program not only saves the team a lot of paper work but time as well, Razon says. Using the wiki, agents are now able to correct information uploaded by their colleagues online without leaving their work place. Messages sent to the PNP’s complaint management system, Text 2920, are also fed into a wiki.

But beyond these out-of-the-box ideas, the PNP leadership must also rethink the distribution of the organization’s resources, Razon admits.

For instance, the UNDP study points out that even if it is the field offices that conduct actual police work, it is the central office that gets the largest share of the budget for maintenance and operating expenses (MOOE). In 2003, the ratio stood at 55:45, already down from a high of 74:26 in 1998 and 1999.

A large chunk of the MOOE goes to overhead expenditures—programs for general administration and support for operations of officials and personnel in the central and regional offices. From 1998 to 2003, the budget for operations—or actual police work—accounted for an average of 26 percent of the MOOE.

HEADQUARTERS FIRST

More often than not, “the headquarters gets the first cut,” Razon admits. For instance, he explains, while 149 police stations do not have any patrol cars, all generals, directors, deputies, and heads assigned to headquarters have staff cars.

When he assumed command over the PNP in 1999, Sen. Panfilo Lacson tells NEWSBREAK that the PNP chief was issued a credit card with no credit limit. Expenses charged against the card are paid for using the “commander’s reserve,” which, according to Lacson, amounted to around P40 million a year. Lacson says he refused to use the commander’s reserve and the credit card while he held the post. (Razon says, however, that he is not aware of such practice.)

“The fiscal management program seeks to bring resources and programs to where our cutting edge is, and not here at headquarters,” Razon says. This means that whenever resources become available, they will initially be distributed to the field offices.

Only when all the field units have their vehicle requirements should the organization start issuing staff cars to officials and personnel at headquarters. “It’s the other way around right now.”

This will not be easy, as it means the PNP’s top brass will have to seriously cut down on expenses and implement belt-tightening measures, Razon says.

But it is necessary, he adds, if headquarters wants to have the moral ascendancy to tell the rest of the organization that they have to make do with what they have right now. “You cannot tell your son that he should sacrifice because you have no money while you are wasting your money on gambling and other vices.” ■

EDITOR’S NOTE: This story is the last in a NEWSBREAK series on the police, made possible by a grant from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Check out www.newsbreak.com.ph for the entire series.

A mobile court goes to jails to hear cases. Youth offenders are first priority.

By ARIES RUFO

WHEN VALENZUELA judge Flo-ro Alejo called out his name, 14-year-old Jeffrey Pineda (not his real name) stood there with a be-fuddled look on his face. Minutes before, he was outside, engaged in rowdy boy talk with some teenagers he had made friends with at a juvenile detention center in Bicutan, Taguig.

He could not recall the last time he saw the judge. After all, he had spent two months at a congested adult cell after being arrested for theft, and for the last seven months, has been staying at the Center for Activities, Development Restorative and Learning Experience (CRADLE), along with more than 200 boys about his age. (CRADLE is a rehabilitation and detention center for the youth.)

Jeffrey looked lost. He did not understand a word of English. He silently watched as the judge, the prosecutor, and the public attorney took turns speaking.

This could be an ordinary courtroom scene—except that it is taking place in a bus that is part of the Justice on Wheels program initiated by the Supreme Court almost two years ago.

The public prosecutor informed the judge that Jeffrey was pleading guilty to the crime and that he is a minor, based on the investigation of a social worker. Considering the admission, Judge Alejo sentenced Jeffrey to a minimum of one month and one day of imprisonment.

Since he had been in detention for nine months already, the judge was informed that Jeffrey had served his sentence. The judge ordered Jeffrey's immediate release.

A court employee approached him and made him sign a document. "O, huwag ka nang uulit ha? 'Pakatino ka na (Don't repeat your misdemeanor. Behave.)," the court employee told him.

Jeffrey was not alone. Three other youths that day who had already served out their sentences were ordered released, either to rejoin their families or be taken into the custody of social workers.

Before them, around 380 youths all over Metro Manila had benefited from the program, one that is overhauling the delivery of



JUSTICE DELIVERED

justice in the country. Instead of people going to inaccessible courts, the court is literally transported to the jails and hears cases.

CHILDREN IN JAIL

Unable to hire private lawyers and neglected by their families, hundreds of minors in conflict with the law have been languishing in jails. Their cases have not moved since overloaded public attorneys and courts inundated with cases have overlooked these children. The result? They remain in detention even after they have served their sentences.

CRADLE has only four motor vehicles and nine policemen and women to escort the youths for their scheduled trials in different courts. Jeffrey had to wait for his turn, and with hundreds of youths in line, he had to stay in detention longer than what was necessary.

"A lot of people do not have easy access to the courts," says SC deputy court administrator and Justice on Wheels committee vice chair Zenaida Elepano.

The lack of judges has caused massive clogging in the courts. Elepano says that, at present, the judge-to-population ratio is 1:50,000.

Minors and the underprivileged are espe-

cially vulnerable. Caught for petty crimes, some of them are charged in regular courts which are already bursting with cases. Failing to have lawyers who will concentrate on their cases, they end up in jail for long periods.

Not knowing the law and the judicial processes, they helplessly await progress of their cases while in jail. Retirement and resignation of judges handling their cases, as well as postponements of hearings because of the failure of the accused or the complainant to appear, add to the children's problem.

LEARNING FROM LATIN AMERICA

When Hilario Davide Jr. became chief justice in 1998, one of his priority programs was for the poor to have access to justice. Under the Action Program for Judicial Reform (APJR), one of the recommendations was to create special courts for the poor and the underprivileged.

In an official visit to Guatemala in 2003, Davide was briefed by authorities about an experiment wherein a mobile court goes around the country. Target areas were far-flung places where there are no judges. Taking note of this innovation, the SC made further trips to Venezuela and Mexico to study their mobile court system.

A year later, a concept paper on the mobile system was drafted for adoption in the

1:50,000 JUDGE-TO-POPULATION RATIO

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Han. Adelio S. Cruz – Deputy Chief of Protocol, DFA. He has also served as director of both the Ceremonials and Immunities and Privileges divisions of the DFA. He has assisted in the state visits of several foreign dignitaries and has conducted numerous lectures and workshops on Philippines protocol practices, social graces, personality development, and management leadership for institutions in the public and private sector.

Atty. Noel R. Fernandez III – Board Secretary and special assistant to the DFA undersecretary for administration. He is a regular lecturer on international law at the Foreign Service Institute and recently completed specialized studies in international humanitarian law in Italy. He topped the 1994 Philippine bar exams and placed second in the Foreign Service Officer's exams.

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Lawsuit Alternatives

FORWARD LOOKERS

su | do | ku

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1	4	3	8	5	2	9	6	7
2	8	6	4	7	9	1	3	5
5	7	9	1	3	6	4	8	2
9	3	4	7	6	8	2	5	1
7	5	1	3	2	4	8	9	6
8	6	2	5	9	1	3	7	4
6	2	8	9	4	5	7	1	3
3	9	5	2	1	7	6	4	8
4	1	7	6	8	3	5	2	9

SOLUTION TO LAST PUZZLE

2	9		3	7
6		1		4
	2		8	6
	2	8		1
3		7	1	9
	8		4	6
1	5		7	
4		3		8
	7	9	3	1

Philippines. The SC, having obtained a US\$120-million loan from the World Bank for the APJR, allocated \$400,000 to start the mobile court.

A bus was purchased and was customized to resemble a regular court. A good half of the bus space was transformed into a court bench, complete with chairs and tables. It has a TV set, coffee maker, refrigerator, and microwave oven. Attached to the bus are two big canopies for outdoor court hearings.

Launched in December 2004, Metro Manila family courts were identified as the first targets for greater impact. Noting the growing number of youths in prison, a conscious effort was made to prioritize their cases. Family court judges were told to make an accounting of their cases and schedule hearings for youths locked for minor offenses. On rotation basis, they travel with the mobile court, leaving the comforts of their bench, and conduct hearings where the children are detained.

As of August this year, a report by the Justice on Wheels committee shows that 380 youths have been released from detention because of their cases' dismissal, suspension of sentence, probation, or their release to the custody of social workers or responsible adults.

Aside from the minors, the mobile court serviced adults languishing in jails for petty crimes. The Justice on Wheels report says that of the 786 criminal cases heard in the mobile court, 328 overstaying adult prisoners have been released from congested city jails of Metro Manila.

BEYOND MANILA

The Justice on Wheels program was so successful that less than two years since it was implemented, the SC procured two more mobile courts. Elepano says the two additional mobile courts will be deployed in Bohol and the Cordillera region, two areas that are in dire need of judges.

Elepano says Bohol is an ideal pilot area outside Metro Manila because of the large number of court vacancies there. In some areas, a single judge handles cases of several towns. The mobile court will travel to these towns that lack courtrooms and judges.

As for the Cordillera region, focus group discussions will be held with tribal leaders on how the program will fit in their tribal laws and practices.

Despite the project's potentials, some judges have expressed misgivings. Tasked by the SC to allocate time for the mobile court system, some argue that it disrupts their own schedule.

But compared to the misery of those who have been in jail for so long, the inconvenience of the judges is a small price to pay. ■

Smokers' Paradise

WHY TOBACCO COMPANIES THRIVE IN THE PHILIPPINES

By ISAGANI DE CASTRO JR.

AFLAWED law, a strong tobacco lobby, lack of support from government, and a weak anti-tobacco citizens movement—all these are stifling the country's implementation of a global campaign against tobacco consumption.

In May 2003, the Philippines signed the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), a global treaty adopted by 191 member-states of the World Health Assembly to fight the tobacco epidemic. The Philippine Senate ratified the treaty in April 2005.

The FCTC became legally binding on February 27, 2005, after at least 40 countries ratified it in November 2004. This reflected the global consensus on the need to combat the tobacco epidemic, which causes five million deaths yearly. In the Philippines, where one-third of adults are current smokers, official data show that 20,000 die each year from tobacco-related diseases.

But the pro-tobacco lobby worked even faster in the Philippines.

Anticipating strict controls on tobacco consumption, total advertising bans, and tax increases that would result from the FCTC, tobacco companies were able to get Congress to pass a weak national law on tobacco control (*see related story*). Anti-tobacco advocates grudgingly supported it since it was better than not having tobacco controls at all.

Republic Act 9211 or the Tobacco Regulations Act of 2003 was passed, which mandates, among others: a smoking ban in public places; prohibiting the sale of cigarettes to minors; requiring health warnings on the side panel of cigarette packs from January 1, 2004, to June 30, 2006; and limited bans on tobacco advertisements. By July 1, 2006, the health warning would occupy 30 percent of the cigarette pack's front panel.

It imposes penalties ranging from at least P500 to P400,000 plus imprisonment, and created an Inter-Agency Committee (IAC) Tobacco Secretariat headed by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

"This law (RA 9211) was just suddenly passed," says Health Undersecretary Alex-



ANTI-SMOKING LAW: SHORT-LIVED SUCCESS

IT TOOK more than 10 years and three presidents before the battle against smoking was won in Congress.

The Anti-Smoking Law was enacted in June 2003 by President Arroyo. It was already Sen. Juan Flavier's last term in office.

The success was short-lived. A few months later, Flavier writes in his upcoming biography, Arroyo inaugurated one of the biggest and most modern cigarette factories in the country in Batangas.

Flavier began the campaign against smoking when he was still a popular health secretary during the first years of the Ramos administration. He launched the "Yosi-Kadiri" campaign, which surprisingly found support in the media, despite the money that cigarette companies brought in through advertisements.

In his first term as senator in 1995, Flavier introduced a bill against smoking. Although the

anti-smoking bill was taken up on the Senate floor, its counterpart in the House barely moved because of conflicting interests.

Legislators, particularly those in tobacco-producing provinces, blocked the bill because of its economic implications. At the same time, he suspected that cigarette companies had begun an intense lobby to kill the bill.

The bill was eventually relegated to the back-burner as the Senate was distracted by other concerns and a Charter-change movement. With an uninterested House, there was no way that an anti-smoking law could be passed.

But Flavier did not give up. Following his reelection in 2001, he re-introduced his pet

bill. Docketed as Senate Bill No.1, it got priority in the Senate calendar.

Flavier's bill was consolidated with six similar bills authored by other senators. On December 20, 2001, the consolidated bill, Senate Bill 1859, was sent to the House for concurrence.

About the same time that the Senate was deliberating the bill, the House surprisingly tackled its version of the bill, following a compromise that was reached in the House, Flavier says. The compromise was to transfer the bill from the committee on health to the committee on trade and industry to ensure that the interests of those in the tobacco industry would be protected.

Based on the report of the joint conference committee, the

House panel was able to insert a phrase ensuring "that the interests of tobacco farmers, growers and stakeholders are not adversely compromised" with the implementation of the proposed law.

But it took another year before the Senate and the House panel finally convened to reconcile disagreeing provisions.

Finally, on June 23, the Tobacco Regulation Act of 2003 was signed into law by President Arroyo.

Among the highlights of the law are the banning of all tobacco and cigarette advertisements in the mass media, the inclusion of warning labels on the ill-effects of tobacco use in cigarette packages, and a ban on cigarette companies' sponsorship of concerts, cultural shows, and sport events.

Many of these are actually being violated. But that's another story. — **Aries Rufo**



ander Padilla. "It was meant to pre-empt the FCTC."

Padilla blames congressional lobbying by the tobacco companies for the inadequate anti-tobacco law. "If you look at every piece of legislation involving sin products, they're watered down. We even have a law that supports tobacco provinces," he says. Unfortunately, he says all treaties, such as the FCTC, are subject to national law, and "national law is followed."

Dr. Encarnita Blanco-Limpin, president of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Alliance-Philippines (FCAP), says RA 9211 does not take bold steps that would curb tobacco use in the Philippines as proposed by the FCTC.

"If we try to compare RA 9211 with the international treaty (the FCTC), RA 9211 does not even come up with the minimum requirements," she says. For instance, the law requires only a health warning that covers 30 percent of the front packet instead of the front and back as suggested by the FCTC. While the FCTC says the health warning may include graphic pictures that have stronger impact on consumer behavior, RA 9211 only allows printed message warnings, such

as, "Cigarette Smoking is Dangerous to Your Health," or "Smoking Kills."

Padilla says the World Health Organization (WHO) has determined that graphic pictures, such as decayed, plaque-filled teeth used in cigarette packs in Thailand, are more effective in changing consumer behavior.

The FCTC recommends that duty-free tobacco products be banned or restricted; RA 9211 is silent on this. The FCTC also urges signatories to require that all tobacco packages state their origin and final-destination market

to discourage smuggling; RA 9211 has no provision on smuggling. While the FCTC encourages governments to adopt tax policies to discourage smoking, Philippines cigarette prices are comparatively low.

PRO-BUSINESS

Another flaw in RA 9211 is the creation of the IAC-Tobacco Secretariat headed by the DTI. It is composed of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Finance, Department of Education, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Justice, De-

partment of Health (DOH), National Tobacco Administration, Philippine Tobacco Institute, and the citizens group FCAP.

Padilla says the composition of the committee secretariat is "flawed" since DTI's priority is to be business-friendly. He says it would have been more appropriate to make the DOH the head of the secretariat. One indication of how the DTI-led secretariat has been remiss in its duty is how it handled the request of tobacco companies to delay the implementation of the new health warnings from July 1, 2006, as stated by the law, to Nov. 1, 2006.

Without convening a meeting, the DTI approved the request of tobacco companies to defer the new health warnings on the grounds of administrative feasibility and logistical concerns. Only two of the 11 members of the secretariat—DOH and FCAP—opposed the request. The secretariat came up with the decision after asking 10 members of the secretariat to submit position papers.

Limpin says tobacco companies had ample time to comply with the requirement on more visible health warnings since they were given three years under RA 9211. "There is no reason why they cannot comply with it," she says. She also points out that the DTI, acting as the head of the secretariat, had no authority to amend RA 9211.

20,000
**DEATHS IN RP EACH YEAR FROM
TOBACCO-RELATED DISEASES**

POOR IMPLEMENTATION

"Each and every one of us is a witness to how poor the law is being implemented. And yet, RA 9211 contains the minimum of FCTC's requirements," says Limpin. Single sticks are freely sold on the streets, even to minors. (Minors actually sell cigarettes.) Only a few cities, notably Makati and Davao, are strictly implementing the ban on smoking in public places.

Nowhere is the contrast more glaring than in Makati and its next-door neighbor, Taguig City. Owners of bars at The Fort in Taguig City close their eyes to smoking inside business establishments. Manila and Quezon City are also lax when it comes to implementing the law.

Victor Dimagiba, director of the DTI's Bureau of Trade Regulation and Consumer Protection, says it is up to civic groups to file a complaint with the tobacco secretariat or a criminal case against erring companies. "The law is queer. The implementing agency is a committee of agencies," he says. "I don't know why DTI is the chairman, it should be DOH."

Dimagiba says tobacco companies have already signed an "individual undertaking" that they will comply with the new health warnings by Nov. 1, 2006. This will be followed by a ban

on TV and radio advertising starting January 1 next year, a ban on cinema and outdoor advertising starting July 1, 2007, and a total ban on mass media advertising beginning July 1, 2008.

Dimagiba says local government units also have a critical role to play in ensuring compliance.

The president of a major tobacco company in the Philippines, who requested anonymity, says they will be complying with the stricter regulations on advertising and health warnings. "We will no longer be sponsoring boxing matches, which we used to do," he says. "This is going to push our marketing people to be more creative."

Limpin says a new bill would have to be crafted to amend RA 9211, but FCAP would first prefer that the law be implemented well. "And in the process of implementing the law," she says, "we can start working for a better law." ■





DEADLY INDUSTRY

THE PHILIPPINES IS ONE OF THE LARGEST MARKETS FOR CIGARETTES IN THE WORLD

By LALA RIMANDO

MANUEL (not his real name), an expatriate from Singapore, loves it here in the Philippines. He savors the active nightlife in Manila, but one thing he definitely looks forward to during his quarterly trips is cheap cigarettes. One 20-piece pack of Marlboro in Singapore costs him about P370. Here it's only P40. He can finish two packs a day.

A few blocks from his office in Ortigas is the parking lot where Boy (not his real name) directs motorists to available slots. He receives an average of P5-tip per customer. Boy, a smoker, puffs a cigarette on some days because a P2-stick is more affordable than lunch.

Affordability in both cases may be relative, but it paints a picture of why the Philippines is a major market for cigarette companies. It is the 14th largest cigarette market in the world where about 54 percent of adult males and 11 percent of adult females are smokers.

No wonder the industry, which used to be dominated by Fortune Tobacco, a company owned by the richest Filipino, Lucio Tan, has become attractive to multinationals like world leader Philip Morris and the second largest, British American Tobacco.

While smoking tobacco or cigarettes has been a favorite habit in many parts of the world for at least 400 years, efforts to control the marketing of this addictive product have not been as focused as in the last two decades. Worldwide, nongovernment organizations have been working to reduce smoking in two ways:

they urge governments to regulate the tobacco industry's business operations (reduce supply), and they raise public awareness on the health hazards of smoking (reduce demand).

These efforts have not gone to waste. According to a 2006 report of Euromonitor, a UK-based research institution that covers country-specific sectors and worldwide trends, consumption of tobacco products has been on a constant decline in all markets, except for two: Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific. But the former's 42-percent increase in consumption from 1999 to 2004 pales in comparison with Asia Pacific's stunning 137-percent growth. China, the biggest tobacco market in the world with 350 million smokers, accounts for the biggest chunk of the growth rate. Asia is said to be the last great frontier for the tobacco industry.

According to Euromonitor, Asians constitute attractive markets for cigarette manufacturers due to their emerging-market status and the tendency for new smokers to consist of young people who have the potential to provide a long product life cycle, not to mention the women for whom smoking often signifies emancipation and financial independence.

In Southeast Asia alone, about 500 billion cigarette sticks are puffed every year. Indonesia tops the list with about 200 billion sticks, while the Philippines comes second with 88 billion sticks.

This means Asians continue to expose themselves to the risks of a killer product. In the Philippines, the top four causes of death—cardiovascular diseases, stroke, cancer (of which lung cancer has the highest incidence), and pulmonary diseases—are all related to smoking. And to think that smoking tobacco and cigarettes is the most preventable cause of death.

A recent survey by different local institutions and the World Health Organization shows that Filipino smokers spent 2.6 percent of their total expenditure in 2003. This is even higher



LUCIO TAN: Wealth from "sin products"

PHILIP MORRIS'S SMOKESCREEN?

IT MAY be tough to find a hardcore anti-tobacco advocate in Tanauan, Batangas, where Philip Morris's most modern cigarette manufacturing facility is located. Not that Tanauan is a company town whose economic and social life revolves around the good graces of its biggest locator. There are, after all, other factories in the vicinity.

But Philip Morris has been the most active in reaching out to its neighbors. Take the case of Celia Riza, 40, a mother of two who lives a few meters away from the cigarette maker's sprawling 12-hectare compound. She doesn't smoke, and suffered from headaches in the past whenever the factory emitted foul smell. But she says she's "grateful for all the help they [Philip Morris] are giving us now."

Riza and 25 other members of a cooperative earn P120 every other day for sewing about 1,000 kilos of rags that they sell to Philip Morris, which provided the P500,000 seed money to buy five sewing machines. The world's leading cigarette company has other livelihood projects with other cooperatives in the area, aside from its donations of books, classrooms, and basketball courts.

Philip Morris's US\$300-million factory in Tanauan is its latest and most modern in Asia. The company operates in 165 countries, churning out 24 billion cigarettes a year, or an average of 100 million sticks a day.

Outside Tanauan, Philip Morris is reaching out to its suppliers, the tobacco farmers in Northern Luzon, by training and helping them with livelihood projects. The company has national projects as well that are focused on education, environment, and the arts.

Chris Nelson, managing director of Philip Morris Philippines, explains that these are meant to earn their social license to operate in the communities where they conduct business. "We are trying to co-exist with society so we have to meet their expectations. We want to be a respected member of society."

In recent years, players of the tobacco industry have been accused of corrupting the ideals of corporate social responsibility or CSR. Multinationals like the British American Tobacco (which has a trading office in Manila) have supported social and environmental projects, and even won awards for them.

But are these a mere smokescreen to detract attention from the deadly effects of their products?

Mallen Baker, development director of a UK-based organization that advocates CSR, explains: "The alternative is to say we don't care whether these companies ignore the harm caused by their products, despoil the environment, and treat their suppliers and staff badly because we think they are far beyond the pale already. But if these companies aim to address these issues, then we should welcome the aim and judge them by their actions."

Baker, however, notes that their market logic works against socially responsible outcomes. In the end, it boils down to more cigarettes sold, and therefore more profits.

—Lala Rimando in Batangas



than what they spent on education (1.6 percent), and health (1.3 percent), and clothing (2.6 percent). On the average, Filipinos consume about 4.2 sticks per day.

LUCIO TAN'S INFLUENCE

Anti-smoking advocates in Asia have seen a silver lining in Singapore and Thailand, where regulation, high taxes, and graphic warnings have resulted in a decline in industry sales. Singapore has reported savings in health-care

cost; government officials attribute this to the restrictions imposed on the industry.

Here, however, cigarette companies continue to thrive and rake in billions of pesos in profits. Their 2004 financial statements submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission show that combined net profits of major players Fortune Tobacco and Philip Morris, plus some other small players, reached P1.7 billion, a 165-percent increase from the year before. These figures may have even

downplayed the real financial performance of the industry. According to Euromonitor, 2004 sales of cigarette companies operating in the Philippines reached US\$1.82 billion, or a whopping P92.88 trillion.

The industry's secret for success is well-known. The tobacco industry has long been a showcase of how political economy works in the Philippines. At the heart of the issue is Lucio Tan.

In a 2004 paper of Australian academics, Steve Chapman and K. Alechnowicz, entitled, "The Philippine Tobacco Industry: the Strongest Tobacco Lobby in Asia," the authors drew on industry documents to highlight the conduct of the tobacco industry in the Philippines since the 1960s. They wrote: "The Philippines has long been considered by the tobacco industry as a laissez faire operating environment ripe for exploitation."

They highlighted how Lucio Tan was able to evade and hinder tax changes through his long-established relationship with the government. Tan allegedly gave political favors, thus laws are favorable to him.

NEAR-MONOPOLY

Tan, the richest in the country and *Fortune's* 451st richest in the world, built his wealth around "sin products," tobacco and alcohol. While he doesn't smoke, Tan set up Fortune Tobacco in 1965 with meager funds, but with big dreams of competing against what was then a cutthroat market of local and foreign brands. His closeness with then President Ferdinand Marcos was the key to generous tax and other incentives that propelled his business to a near-monopoly of the local cigarette market. He learned the trade quickly and introduced a new budget cigarette brand, Hope, which turned out to be his major money-spinner.

Tan also bagged the license to manufacture and sell brands of RJ Reynolds, which was eventually bought by Japan Tobacco. Fortune Tobacco has a wide portfolio of cigarette brands that cover almost all pricing points, from premium to low-priced cigarettes. These allowed Fortune Tobacco to maintain its market share for years, thanks to discriminatory pricing advantages that allowed its brands to be classified as local brands, which translated to lower tax duties.

Its major competitor, Philip Morris (Philippine) Manufacturing Inc., whose international brand names like Marlboro and Philip Morris were then manufactured and distributed by its licensee, La Suerte Cigar and Cigarette Company, were classified as international brands. Thus, Philip Morris brands had higher taxes.

Fortune Tobacco and Tan were also sued

by the tax bureau for avoiding taxes by manipulating the computation of excise taxes which was based on the selling price of cigarettes that leave its factory. A seven-level distribution chain made up of dummy marketing companies effectively reduced the taxes it paid. Some of Tan's numerous tax cases remain pending in court after more than a decade.

Two years ago, the government heeded efforts to improve its revenue base. Excise taxes levied on "sin" products, which were effective 2004, again showed how the guidelines were crafted in favor of Fortune Tobacco. A three-tiered tax structure based on retail prices favored the Fortune Tobacco brands, such as Winston, over its competitor, Marlboro. This prompted competitors to launch low- to mid-priced brands which were subject to a lower tax rate. However, these newly launched brands were eventually disadvantaged as the tax bureau's interpretation of the law favored old brands.

As of 2005, excise tax collections on cigarette brands totaled P23 billion, surpassing its P22-billion goal for the year.

Fortune Tobacco, however, is up against a giant, Philip Morris. As the Philippines increasingly became an important market to multinational players, Philip Morris upped the ante of competition and decided to break up with partner La Suerte, so it could take control of its operations here.



Philip Morris knows how to play the game. In 2003, it opened its most modern manufacturing facility in Batangas, with no less than President Arroyo inaugurating it. She used the occasion to highlight that Philip Morris's \$300-million (P16 billion) factory is a testament to investor confidence in her administration.

Philip Morris now accounts for about 27 percent of the local cigarette market. It has eaten into what used to be an almost 80-percent market share of Fortune Tobacco.

In one of Philip Morris's conference rooms where smoking is allowed, a rarity in smoke-free Makati City, managing director Chris Nelson tells NEWSBREAK that one of the reasons they decided to invest in a factory in the Philippines is the available supply of tobacco leaf.

Tobacco-growing provinces in Northern Luzon include Isabela, Ilocos Sur, La Union, and Pangasinan. Forty-four thousand hectares of agricultural land, about 0.39 percent of total arable land in the country, are devoted to tobacco-growing. About 50,000 farmers are engaged in the tobacco industry there.

"I see a vibrant industry ahead," Nelson says confidently when asked about the business prospects in the Philippines.

Offhand, this may sound too optimistic, considering the upcoming restrictions on the industry, especially in marketing and distribution of the products (*see related story*). Brand equity of cigarettes, like other fast moving consumer goods, is highly dependent on advertising.

HUGE ADVERTISERS

According to a report by Nielsen Media Research, a local research company that tracks various industry sectors in the country, in 2005 alone, the cigarette companies spent a total of \$49.5 million or about P2.5 billion, almost double their total budget in 2001. Bulk went to radio (49 percent) and TV (46 percent), both catering to the masses. Even the young, who are supposed to be discouraged from buying cigarettes, are exposed to both media.

Fortune Tobacco, which used pin-up ladies in its calendars, was the consistent big spender. In 2005, it spent about P2.5 billion in advertising. Philip Morris has not been as aggressive, dramatically decreasing its advertising in mass media in 2003. In 2005, it spent only about P81 million for TV, radio, and print advertisements. According to its financial statements,

though, it spent P870 million for its advertising and promotion efforts.

Given the restrictions on mass media advertising channels, sponsorships, sampling, and other methods of marketing, there is more stress on the importance of retail distribution and point-of-sale marketing. A number of factors at the point of sale are believed to have an impact on the consumer's decision to buy. These include pack positioning and the number of facings of the packs, particularly when a purchaser is not loyal to any specific brand.

Packaging, referred to by marketers as the final form of advertising, is going to be regulated. The text warnings, however, show that the Philippines is more permissive with the industry compared to other countries. Thailand and Singapore require the cigarette companies to display graphic images of decomposing teeth and gums and a dead fetus, among others. Some of these packs with stern warnings are churned out by Philip Morris's factory in Batangas.

"We envy how these countries are really trying to make sure the consumer is fully informed of the product risks through these graphic warnings," says Encarnita Blanco-Limpin, president of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Alliance-Philippines. "Graphic warnings are better because even those who don't know how to read can see for themselves what they are getting into."

Despite these restrictions, the industry players are expected to come up with creative ways to circumvent the restrictions, just like what cigarette companies operating in other countries have done. Brand sharing, or coming up with brand names, such as Marlboro Classics clothing lines and Camel boots, are some of the efforts to extend brand following.

One characteristic of the Philippine cigarette market is that as an archipelago, there are up to one million points of sales that consist mostly of *sari-sari* stores and street vendors. There are brands that are regional favorites, too. But mentholated products remain to be a bestseller.

Jump boys who sell the cigarettes on the streets on a per-stick basis harp on the affordability of the product, even among the poorest Filipinos. And if Nelson's optimism about the industry's prospects is proven to be correct, anti-smoking advocates will have to double their efforts to counter their giant foes. ■

P92.88
TRILLION
2004 SALES
OF CIGARETTE COMPANIES
IN THE PHILIPPINES

A LITTLE PUSH HELPS SMOKERS TO QUIT

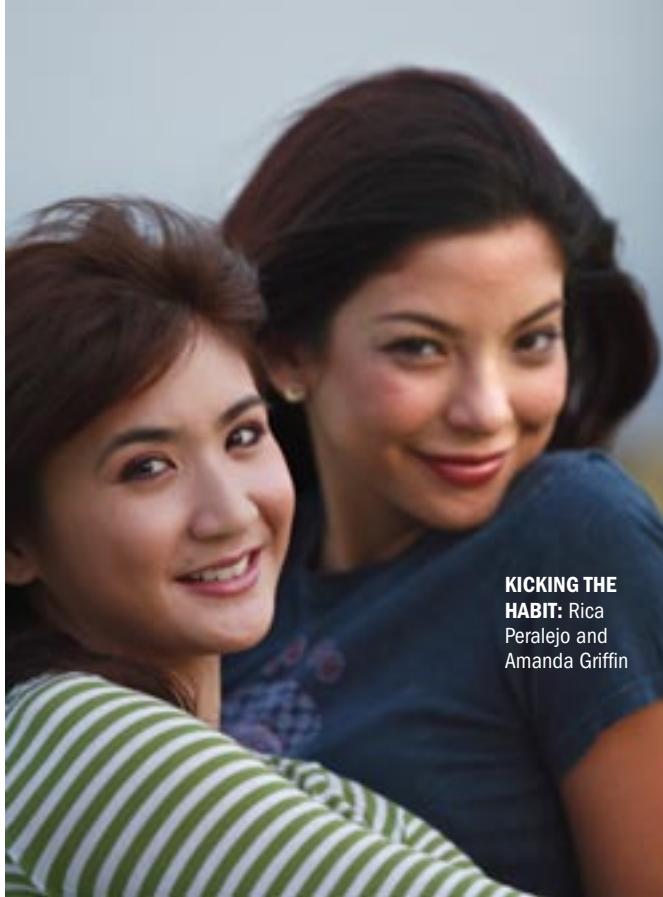
By CARMELA FONBUENA

“I’VE BEEN chewing my nicorette gums like crazy,” says model, host, and events organizer Amanda Griffin, 27. In an interview on September 14, she swore that she hasn’t lit a cigarette since August 23, the day the “Kick it! Beat it!” quit-smoking challenge of Pfizer Consumer Healthcare was launched. She has so far stood up to the challenge.

Griffin and three other media personalities—Rica Peralejo, Epy Quizon, and Vito Lazatin—were given 40 days to quit smoking for good. The challenge ends on October 1.

A self-confessed “heavy smoker,” Griffin admits that the challenge isn’t easy, especially during the first week. Smoking was practically ingrained in her lifestyle. “I smoke when I’m out with friends. I smoke when I have to wait. I smoke when I’m bored. I smoke after eating, which signals the end of my meal.”

The nature of Griffin’s job lends itself to smoking. There’s always a party here and there. Drinking usually goes with smoking, she



KICKING THE HABIT: Rica Peralejo and Amanda Griffin

LUIS IWANG
Nicorette gums are

“Hopefully, this would increase awareness among Filipino smokers that they, too, can quit if they set their minds into doing so,” says DOH Secretary Francisco Duque III during the launch of the “Kick It! Beat It!” challenge.

Local studies show that 69 percent of Filipino smokers have tried or considered quitting. But it’s easier said than done. Nicotine in cigarettes provides a “pleasurable feeling” to the users, Dayrit says. “Asking a smoker to quit the habit is like asking a child to give up his or her candies.”

“I wouldn’t have done it without the nicotine gums. I have my lollipops, too,” Griffin says.

Shaking Off an Addiction

says. Sometimes, shoots require her to be up all night. Smoking keeps her up. She used to puff a pack or 20 sticks of Marlboro Lights a day.

Like drug addiction, quitting cigarettes involves withdrawal syndromes. Those who are trying to kick off the habit tend to be more irritable, anxious, and disturbed. They lose their appetite, too, says Luz Dayrit of the Philippine General Hospital’s (PGH) Stop-Smoking Program. They operate a clinic for those who need help in quitting the habit.

Dayrit says they have a low success rate because they can only offer counseling. PGH cannot provide assistance through nicotine gums, for example, because of tight resources.

Actress Rica Peralejo, 25, blames the same crazy schedule of show business for her addiction to cigarettes. It didn’t help that the people she looked up to smoked. “I saw powerful and strong women who smoked. It looked sexy.” She also comes from a family of smokers. At the peak of her cigarette addiction, Peralejo could puff an average of two packs or 40 sticks of Marlboro Reds a

day. “I needed it to stay awake and to relax,” she says. “It’s a fix.”

Peralejo had to pay for the habit dearly in 2000, when she was in and out of the hospital for laryngitis. Sometimes she’d lose her voice, too. “I was at the height of my career and the stress levels were high,” she says. Her sister, Paula, who is also an actress, had her tonsils removed. Ironically, she is the passive smoker in the family.

Peralejo had since then wanted to quit but she couldn’t manage to do it by herself. The least she could do was to shift to Marlboro Lights. When she was invited to join Pfizer’s “Kick It! Beat It!” challenge, she accepted. It could be the opportunity she’s been waiting for, she says. Unlike Griffin, Peralejo did not have to depend on nicotine gums. “I’m a cold turkey now,” she says.

Pfizer regularly monitors their progress and checks the level of carbon monoxide in their system. In support of the Department of Health’s (DOH) smoking cessation program, the campaign is intended to inspire other smokers to quit.

the only available form of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) in the Philippines. The gum’s low nicotine level is intended to help during the early phase of quitting. The gums are available in Mercury drugstores at P20 per gum without prescription.

Nicorette spray, nicorette patch, and other forms of NRT are available in other countries. A health department official has said that the demand for these products is low in the Philippines.

What are the benefits of quitting so far?

Three weeks out of the habit, Griffin says her appetite has improved. “Food really tastes better,” she says as she reached for the fries served during the interview. Gaining weight is a new problem for her, however. “I have to work harder in the gym,” she says. But who says that leading a healthy lifestyle is going to be easy?

“But I don’t want to jinx it by saying I have totally kicked the habit. It’s only in the infancy stage. I may have a few bumps on the way, but I hope that I don’t light a cigarette again.” ■

Puffing Teens

ACCESS TO CIGARETTES IS EASY

By CARMELA FONBUENA

OITER BY the *sari-sari* stores in the university belt in Manila and observe students during their break. They puff cigarettes—and the vendors are happy to earn from them. Never mind that many of these students must be under 18 and are not allowed by law to smoke. These *sari-sari* stores require no identification cards from their customers.

A 2003 Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) by the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that in the Philippines, four out of 10 high school students aged 13 to 15 have smoked cigarettes, or have taken one or two puffs. Some of them (one in every eight smokers) got into the habit before they were 10 years old.

Access to this addictive and restricted product has become easier than in 2000, when the same GYTS survey was conducted. From 46.6 percent of the respondents in 2000, 62.8 percent were allowed to buy cigarettes in 2003. With over 7,000 respondents nationwide, the survey also shows that boys are more inclined to smoke than girls.

For these adolescents, it's usually curiosity or peer pressure that gets them into the habit.

Curiosity got AG when he was 13. He puffed his first cigarette during the summer before he went to high school. He didn't like it. But his friends in high school were smokers and they influenced him to smoke. "It's all about peer pressure," he says. He started with two sticks a day. He and his friends smoked after school hours, during their drinking sprees, and whenever they hung out outside school. At 15, he was smoking six sticks a day. "Your body starts looking for it," he says.

AG was able to quit for a full year during his junior year in high school but it was the same peer pressure that got him back

4 OUT OF 10
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
AGED 13-15 HAVE
SMOKED CIGARETTES

into the habit when he was in senior year. Now 25, AG smokes up to 10 sticks on a regular day. Eleven years

into the habit, "rigorous activities" like jogging make breathing difficult for him. AG realizes it's the price he has to pay for smoking. He is planning to cut down his daily dose and eventually quit.

Gerry, 27, had to pay more than AG did for the habit. Despite his asthma, Gerry started smoking at 18. He was a working student and it was his way to cope with stress. He smoked a pack of cigarettes or 20 sticks a day.

Five years later, Gerry started having difficulty in breathing and suffered painful coughs. At first he thought it was his normal asthma attacks. But when his medica-

tions didn't work, he sought his doctor. He was diagnosed with stage one lung cancer and had to undergo two sessions of chemotherapy. Hating the thought that he would be pitied, he endured everything without telling his family. Luckily, the tumor in his lungs is now benign.

Smoking is a difficult habit to break, however. Gerry still smokes.

Despite the alarming results, the 2003 GYTS survey shows improvements compared to 2000. The incidence of parents smoking remains the same, 56 percent of the respondents in 2000 and 2003, but there's a decline in use among young boys (21.8 percent of the respondents in 2003 compared to 32.6 percent in 2000) and among young girls (8.8 percent of the respondents in 2003 compared to 12.9 percent in 2000). Eighty-eight percent of them want to quit, too.

WHO recognizes the benefits of an increase in the anti-smoking sentiment in the Philippines. The Clean Air Act, which was enacted in 1999, instituted smoke-free indoor air laws. This resulted in less students, 59 percent in 2003 from 74.6 percent in 2000, exposed to second-hand smoke. More respondents in 2003 are aware of the health risks of smoking, which resulted in stronger support for banning smoking in various areas.

Ironically, it is cigarette company Phillip Morris Manufacturing Inc. that advocates non-cigarette use among the youth. Partnering with University of Asia and the Pacific, Philip Morris funds the university's "I Am Strong" program, which holds

seminars for the youth nationwide and orients them on social and moral issues like premarital sex, career building, homosexuality, and teenage pregnancies. In every "I Am Strong" undertaking, a representative from Phillip Morris speaks to dissuade the youth from smoking.

"We don't pass judgment on the smokers. We don't tell them that it's a sin. We tell them that smoking is an adult decision," says medical doctor Antonio Torralba, who heads the "I Am Strong" program. "We can see that Philip Morris is very sincere with the program."

Driving away the adolescents as potential consumers "makes good business sense," says Chris Nelson, managing director of Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc. "Otherwise we wouldn't have a social license to operate." ■



UIS LUWANAG



BONDING:
Mother
and child

THE MANY FACES OF URBAN YOUTH

From prostitutes to punks, activists to millionaires, mall workers to fish vendors, nurses to dancers, policemen to athletes, gays to garbage collectors: they were the subjects of 21 young and aspiring photojournalists from Europe and Asia in a week-long forum held recently in Manila.

The images they took gave special attention to the seemingly ordinary life of ordinary people.

The Asia-Europe Foundation, together with the World Press Photo, and the Philippine Center for Photojournalism, hosted the annual forum with the objective of raising the quality of photojournalism.

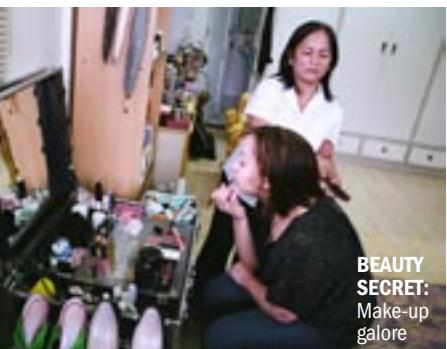
The complete reportage of all the participants can be seen on our Web site, www.newsbreak.com.ph. —LeANNE Jazul



WINDOW SHOPPING: Vicarious thrill



SHARING THE PAIN: Nurse provides comfort



BEAUTY SECRET:
Make-up galore



I BELIEVE I CAN FLY: Ballet dancers during rehearsal

MOVING MOUNTAINS:
Digging for food



THE NEW MULTINATIONAL



PAUL MATA

With the Philippines as its launch pad, Chikka is poised to become a major international player

By JET DAMAZO

A LONG ONE of the major thoroughfares in Metro Manila is a huge green billboard not unlike the signs seen in the United States announcing the population of a new town. It says: Welcome to Chikka Country. Population: 85 million+.

In only five years, the Philippines has become Chikka country. The company claims that its pioneering PC-to-mobile phone messaging system is the most widely used Internet-based messaging system today, next to e-mail.

With a strong base of over 30 million registered users, Chikka is now a multinational company with a presence in 11 countries worldwide, including the US, China, India, Japan, and Singapore.

The company's sheer innovativeness in developing wireless applications services that cater to various markets takes the credit for this success. After launching its pioneering PC-to-mobile phone messaging system, the company has consistently churned out innovative services widely patronized by technology-savvy markets both here and abroad.

Chikka's PC-to-mobile system allows a user to send a text message free from a computer. Their model only earns if a reply is sent to Chikka, which costs P2.50 each. This fee is shared by Chikka and the telecom companies.

OFWS who want to stay in touch with their families and friends in the Philippines make

up the large majority of their users. In fact, Filipinos in the US form the single largest community in Chikka outside of the Philippines. However, while OFWs are a big market, the utility of Chikka's products is universal. In India, where there is no significant Pinoy community, its messenger achieved about a million downloads in only six months.

Junie Agcaoili, the company's corporate communications guy, says they are prudent in spending for marketing and concentrate on research and development. But this innovativeness is not limited to the research department. Chikka has stood out among similar companies in the country by being creative in the business aspect as well.

Janet Toral, president of the Philippine Internet Society, explains, "What they did isn't so groundbreaking, in the sense that there were services that allowed you to send an SMS from your PC. But Chikka's edge was in making it sustainable."

Agcaoili says that for the business to be sustainable, they had to have contracts with the telecommunications companies. Other similar services simply provided the service for free, rendering them unsustainable.

Chikka licensed technologies to its partners that allow the highly successful credit or "load" transfers, the mobile purchase of credits for online games, and the sending of credits as donations, such as for victims of calamities. Much of the content people download—like ring tones, logos, and voice alerts—is also made possible by technologies developed by Chikka.

Chikka stayed away from the typical dot-com business model of relying on banner advertising for revenue and developed its own business model from scratch. It also helps that they armed themselves with pat-

ents and acquired internationally recognized certifications that made it hard for the world to ignore them.

Chikka and its affiliate companies claim to own the largest portfolio of patents around SMS applications worldwide. Aside from an ISO certification it bagged in April, Chikka announced that it has achieved the prestigious certification for Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) Level 5 of Carnegie Mellon's Software Engineering Institute. Maturity Level 5 is the highest standard of quality in the global IT Industry.

"This certification means that the company has inculcated a certain level of discipline in developing its products," explains Toral. "This makes it easier for them to negotiate with the big boys abroad."

Thus Chikka is poised to conquer the rest of the cell phone-wielding world. Two months after achieving the CMMI certification, Chikka announced its interconnectivity with Google's instant messaging system, Google Talk. In addition to the US and Asian countries which it has already entered through various forms of partnerships with local companies, Chikka is testing the Latin American market and is ready to enter the Middle East and Europe as well.

"We always knew that our growth would be driven by uniting more and more communities," says Agcaoili.

Winston Padojinog, an IT industry analyst and faculty at the University of Asia and the Pacific's economics department, says that Chikka's being based in the Philippines is a critical factor in its success in going abroad. "The country's unique situation facilitates innovation. With just two or three telecommunications partners, they can test their new products because of the scale these partners provide."

Chikka capitalizes on this. "The Philippines has been our launch pad because of the cooperation of networks and the advanced texting culture. If it sells here, it is likely to sell abroad," says Agcaoili. "We have enough experience in the Philippines to choose which among our products would have early adoption abroad."

And they have proven their point. In Thailand, for instance, they launched an interactive mobile game in 2004 that broke the record for the largest volume of SMS messages generated by a single application in one day. "The numbers were in the hundreds of thousands. These are volumes not seen in the Philippines," says Agcaoili.

"The world is their oyster," says Toral, "but they can't rest on their laurels. The moment they stop innovating is the moment they die." ■

REALITY CHECK

Demand for an English-speaking workforce is high

By MYLAH REYES ROQUE

THAT THE Filipino worker's English proficiency is high has come under serious doubt.

Overheard at McDonald's in front of the Makati Medical Center one morning in August: "Sausage McMuffin with coffee and hash brown, please." The voice was well modulated, the words rolling smoothly from one to the next—much like the way Americans speak. It wasn't an expat executive speaking but a young Filipino wearing a sweatshirt with a call center insignia.

Beside the fast food was a salon on the ground floor of a building that houses a call center. Businesses (like the salon) that service call center agents have become a sub-industry altogether—a testimony to the growth of call centers that have been fueled, in turn, by an English-speaking workforce.

Given the growth of service industries such as call centers, business process outsourcing (BPO), tourism spurred by medical services, and the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL), is the Philippines competing to be the best English-speaking country in the region?

English advocates say it should, if the country is to develop its competitive advantage in services. In fact, the demand for a competent English-speaking workforce has not been met, with college graduates failing to fill the gaps.

An IT consultant who helps set up IT systems for call centers reveals that competing companies have been poaching on each other's call center agents. These companies, the consultant says, are willing to offer "good money" to an agent who is fluent in English and who has selling or support experience.

Otherwise, the companies settle for new agents who are retrained for a month or more to think and speak in English. "The training is typically done by companies that offer language courses, such as Berlitz,



with the finishing touches done by a foreigner who'll round off the needed twang."

The whole process is expensive, making the sign-up bonuses that go as high as P50,000 seem like a paltry sum. Each week, the Sunday classifieds show the same companies competing for the same recruits with half- to full-page advertisements.

Data from the education department show a decline in English, math, and science proficiency. The National Achievement Test administered in school year 2004-2005 shows that Grade 6 students have achievement rates of 54.12 percent in science, 59.10 percent in math, and 59.15 percent in English.

The proficiency level for students in fourth year high school is worse with 39.49 percent in science, 50.70 percent in math, and 51.33 percent in English. Overall, almost half of the students did not pass the exams.

Filipinos acknowledge that their proficiency in English has declined over the past 12 years, the March 2006 Social Weather Stations survey shows. When compared to results of the same survey in December 1993 and September 2000, the 2006 data mirror a decline in all aspects of English proficiency, most notably in the ability to speak English.

"The pool of natural speakers has dried up," says Anj Backstrom, source manager for eTelecare. "We have a 2-percent passing rate. Only two out of 100 applicants pass our IQ and communications skills test. That is why we are now into training partnerships with schools to ensure that we will have a steady source of agents."

Recently, 16 students from the Holy Angel University in Pampanga visited the call center. The school is the first in the country to offer a two-year associate degree in

call center training for high school graduates. Such partnerships, Backstrom says, are long-term measures to address the problem of finding recruits in the future.

Frenchman Robert de Quelen, who lives in the Philippines and is a member of EON The Stakeholder Relations Firm, the group behind "English is Cool" campaign, says that English is "not a privilege" but an opportunity to be "at par with the best in other countries. We want Filipino global workers to replace OFWs and ultimately we want the jobs to be created here rather than people having to go look for jobs abroad."

Not everyone believes that English is the language of development, however. Roldano Hero Vaswani of the Kilusang Makabayang Ekonomista says the problem of finding inexpensive labor that speaks English is a problem unique to call centers.

"Agro-industrial economies, like China and Japan, prove [that] the language of development is mathematics and science. The European community, taken as a whole, is the largest economy and it doesn't speak English exclusively," he argues.

English language advocates point out that Filipinos started to lose their English proficiency under the Aquino administration when the primary medium of instruction shifted from English to Filipino.

Now big business has the ear of government. One of the first orders issued by Education Secretary Jesli Lapus was DEPED Order 36, which requires English to be the primary medium of instruction in all public and secondary high schools. It also requires that it be taught as a second language starting in Grade 1 and that it be the medium of instruction for math and science starting in Grade 3. ■

51.33 % ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL FOR FOURTH YEAR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

IMAGINED REPUBLIC

The MNLF was high on propaganda but low on military action. They rarely initiated encounters with the Armed Forces.

By PATRICIO N. ABINALES

THE MORO National Liberation Front (MNLF) envisioned their Bangsamoro Republic to encompass Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago, and Palawan. But it is unattainable, as plebiscite after plebiscite has indicated that the majority is not keen on becoming part of it. Muslim disunity caused by class, ethnic, and linguistic differences has aggravated the situation.

These days, the children and grandchildren of Christian settlers have their own idea of separatism, ably articulated by the most unlikely of allies—from MindanaNews' intrepid chief Carolyn Arguillas to the dreaded Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte. But there is no evidence that this settler version has found common ground with its Muslim counterpart. Meanwhile, the *lumad* are demanding their God-given right to their "ancestral homeland."

But what makes this imagined republic all the more surreal is the incongruity between the propaganda and the task of fighting to attain it. The remarkable thing about the MNLF's war was how very few its engagements were against the AFP. The burning of Jolo in February 1974 and the first MNLF assaults of AFP positions soon after martial law was declared may be epic battles worthy of poignant reminiscences by academics and activists. But these were the exceptions because they were never duplicated after that.

They also rarely went beyond the Muslim zones. In a preliminary mapping of the battle areas from 1977 to 2001, Ateneo de Manila University lecturer Edmund Ramos and I found out that the MNLF basically limited its battles to the provinces of Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Zamboanga del Sur, and Maguindanao. The majority were single engagements and "chance" encounters, that is MNLF and AFP forces accidentally



LUIS LIVANAG

stumbling into each other leading to a fire-fight. Very few were planned ambushes or actual operations by the MNLF or the AFP, respectively (Table 1).

The MNLF eventually resorted to guerrilla warfare and expanded into other provinces once it became clear that it could sustain a conventional war against the AFP. But these were efforts that came late in the game: by the 1980s negotiations had become the more important arena than the battlefield.

Why such a limited battle space? For one, there is the imbalance in firepower. The MNLF may have received war material from Libya and Malaysia, but as negotiations took precedence under Libyan sponsorship and as Malaysia's interest faded, so did the number of weapons smuggled into Mindanao. The

Table 1. TYPES OF MILITARY ENCOUNTERS, MNLF-AFP, 1979-2002

YEAR	AFP-INITIATED	MILF-INITIATED	CHANCE ENCOUNTERS
1972	2	2	1
1973	6	-	8
1983	-	1	1
1984	3	1	2
1986	2	-	2
1987	2	1	3
1988	-	1	1
1989	-	3	1
1990	-	3	-
1993	1	2	-
2001	1	2	4
2002	-	-	-
TOTAL	17	16	22

Source: Abinales and Ramos data file, 2004

Marcos dictatorship, however, continued to receive substantial military support from the US government. And while this declined in the 1980s, it was still sizeable enough to maintain the AFP's fighting capacity.

A related problem was the nature of the Bangsa Moro Army itself. Despite transforming itself into a guerrilla force in the 1980s, it remained essentially a defensive organization. Its battles were designed to maintain physical control of certain towns, municipalities, and city outskirts where it was sure of strong mass support. In this constricted war zone, it was easier for the AFP to pinpoint their location and counter-attack. And when the MNLF sent "expansion teams" to other provinces, they were easily eliminated after one or two encounters.

More important than firepower was the MNLF's myopic political vision. It may have unified the *umma*, but it failed to breach the wall of anti-Muslim bigotry that separated the Muslim areas from the settlement zones. Neither did Nur Misuari and his comrades reach out to the *lumad* groups in the Mindanao and Palawan hinterlands, a community that had tensions with the Muslims as far back as pre-colonial times. Unlike the communists, the MNLF lacked a "united front" strategy to mobilize the two other critical groups to its side.

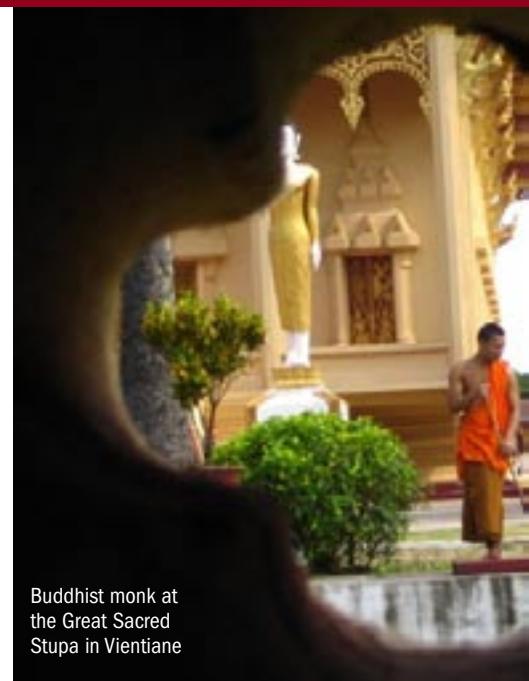
What really gave the war a place in the myth of "100-year Moro struggle" was the extensive collateral damage it inflicted on Muslim Mindanao. Then Batangas Rep. Eduardo Ermita reported in 1996 that over a period of 26 years since 1970, more than 100,000 persons had been killed in the conflict in southern Philippines. The government suffered about 30 percent of the casualties, the rebels more than 50 percent, while civilians caught in the crossfire came to about 20 percent of total casualties.

About 55,000 persons were wounded, not counting those from the rebel side. From 1970 to 1975 alone, an average of 18 people were slain every day. The left-wing Ibon Foundation estimated the total cost of the war since 1973 to be about P73 billion, or P7.1 million per day.

This collateral damage is the most crucial element in understanding why the separatist war nurtures the image of an unstable "Mindanao." It is not the scale or breadth of the confrontations, but the apprehension that more conflict could recur that will aggravate community instability and make displaced families hesitate to return to their communities. ■



Wat Pha Kaew
museum, a former royal
temple in Vientiane



Buddhist monk at
the Great Sacred
Stupa in Vientiane

HISTORY FOR TOURISTS

Heritage and museums sell—as Southeast Asian countries show

By JOHN SILVA

ON THE surface, it looked like a scholarly get-together of 60 museologists from 10 Southeast Asian countries holed up in the massive Cambodia Hotel in Phnom Penh.

For four days, curators, archaeologists, cultural ministers, and museum directors pored through documents and reviewed powerpoint presentations of their respective heritage and cultural projects. One of those days was an excursion to nearby temples and museums. After this exhaustive review, the whole group flew to Vientiane, Laos, to repeat the routine.

“Cultural mapping” was one of the themes of this workshop sponsored and led by the Paris-based International Council of Museums. In reality, it was to be a strategy planning session for museologists to aggressively position their museums and historical sites at the center of their country’s tourism agendas.

The Asia-Pacific region, despite SARS and the recent tsunami, continues to post an impressive increase in tourist arrivals: a 30-percent increase in just one year for Laos; 15- to 20-percent leaps posted in many other countries.

The reason for the boom hasn’t been more CNN commercials of “Malaysia Truly

Asia” beamed to European and American travelers. It’s wealthy Thais now crossing over to Cambodia, Indonesians invading Singapore, and even Filipinos flying to affordable Bangkok.

It used to be that Southeast Asian tourism advertisements were all hawking sand, sun, and even women. But this kind of marketing has reached saturation point and the more astute tourism boards of the various countries are sniffing at heritage tourism.

Along with the usual country flag pins, delegates were exchanging brochures on heritage trails, folk museums, and colonial architecture. “Cultural mapping” was actually a group exercise on how to persuade the hundreds of thousands of heritage groupie travelers from bustling Angkor Wat in Siem Reap to go to sleepy Phnom Penh.

The delegates one day boarded buses to drive for several hours outside the city to visit Phnom Chisor Temple, a nearby silk-weaving village, the Tonli Bate Lake resort, and several other temples in the region. One evening, there was a tour of the Cambodian national museum.

The delegates noted the various cultural offerings that could be potential employment opportunities and reviewed the lack of infrastructure hindering the tourist potential of

the area. And most importantly, preventive steps were offered to make sure that an increase in tourists would not harm or pollute the already fragile temples and sites.

HIGH-END TOURISTS

Likewise, the group was posed the same question on their trip to Laos: how to get the throngs of tourists now invading UNESCO Heritage Site Luang Prabang diverted to the sleepy capital of Vientiane?

The delegates again took a day-long bus tour of the Great Sacred Stupa (Pha That Luang), the former royal temple Wat Pha Kaew, the oldest temple Wat Si Saket, and a resort site outside the city. A side trip to the Lao national museum was also scheduled.

Both countries’ national museums have significant and very precious holdings. Much of Cambodia’s Khmer art and buddhas from Laos were stolen and wound up in museums in Europe and the United States. There are still some very fine pieces left to appreciate. In Laos, security precautions are so tight that their most precious buddhas are locked behind thick glass and bars that they could hardly be seen.

The Thai delegation was serene and authoritative. After all, they had 14 million visitors last year. Aside from their beach



Khmer sculptures in the National Museum of Cambodia

paradise Phuket, Thailand has long known that their temples and heritage sites like Ayuthaya and ancient cities like Chiang Mai have an appeal to high-end tourists. Thanks to a well-loved monarchy, their national museum and national archives will expand significantly in honor of the King's ongoing jubilee celebrations.

Singapore—despite the brickbats about having all that money to buy themselves culture, erect museums, and heritage theme districts—is laughing all the way to the bank (2004 tourism receipts was 9.4 billion Singapore dollars).

After realizing that colonial architecture does bring in wealthy tourists, Singapore began to take a second look at its old buildings ready for the wrecking ball and proceeded to fix them with a vengeance. Then the Singaporeans went on a museum-building binge, and by the end of this year, will cap it with their newly-renovated national museum.

The sleeper country has been Malaysia. Last year, Malaysia posted 16.43 million visitors (four million of that from Singapore alone). That's eight times more than the paltry two million yearly visits that the Philippines has been lingering in for the past decade.

Malaysia has reached this astounding double-digit figure due to a strong heritage thrust in marketing efforts. It has long partnered with local heritage nongovernment organizations, with former senior government officials taking on trusteeships. This collaboration has resulted in keeping significant heritage sites

intact, in constructing new museums, and refurbishing Malaysia's national museum.

There's an added secret to the country's tourism success. Blessed with a population of only 26 million and a low growth rate (2 percent), the country has been able to keep intact and preserve its huge forest reserves, national parks, and pristine seashores. It has eco-tourism, and a genuine one at that.

ROADBLOCKS

For those nine days, museum and heritage "heavies" played surrogate parents to up-and-coming Laos and Cambodia, helping them to identify the roadblocks to increased tourism traffic. Many of the recommendations were pertinent to many of our own countries.

They include: increase government funding for museums and heritage sites; build infrastructure to reach outlying provinces with heritage tourism potential; preserve colonial, temple, and indigenous architecture; develop arts and crafts of higher quality; and promote arts and cultural festivals throughout the year.

The last two have been adroitly mastered by Thai tourism officials. This year, they decided they will look more closely at tourist revenues rather than tourist arrivals. If they can increase the former significantly, then there is no mad rush to pump tourist arrivals. Thus, the pressure is on to produce and sell more expensive crafts, souvenir items, and have fancier festivals in the hopes of

bringing richer tourists to their country.

Vietnamese delegates were quite articulate in promoting heritage tourism. They have already exceeded the Philippines in foreign tourist arrivals (three million last year) and they plan to reach 18 million next year.

They have had a unique plan to boost local tourism and they have been counting on the over 10 million locals who have been visiting monuments, museums, and heritage sites throughout their country. The Ho Chi Minh house museum in Hanoi never ceases to have long lines each day. And they have some enviable eco-tourist sights like Ha Long Bay as well.

The Vietnamese not only push ancient heritage sites like Hue but they are gung-ho about making sure their countrymen visit monuments and sites that chronicle their recent victories—such as defeating the US in 1975.

Our Southeast Asian counterparts imparted a lot of lessons to the Philippine delegation. It was obvious that heritage and museums sell and their tourist figures show it. In the Philippines, our over 200 museums, including the national museum, could use more government support for maintenance, renovation, and exhibition programs.

The most recent announcement by Tourism Secretary Joseph Durano to push malls as tourism sites might be revisited. From our conversations with Thai and Singaporean delegates, they acknowledge that their own malls have brought in tourists. But they know wisely that heritage tourism is what draws high-end spenders. ■

OUR 200-PLUS MUSEUMS NEED MORE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

EUROPEAN SAMPLER

Switzerland offers French, German, and Italian attractions



LUCERN: Storybook image of a Swiss town

By LALA RIMANDO

I NEVER imagined encountering Freddie Aguilar in a ski resort in Switzerland. No, not the '80s pop-soul artist himself, but his original version of "Anak" as background music in a revolving cable car amidst the Swiss Alps.

I snapped out of my awe of the snowcapped summits and made my way through the crowd of sun-kissed skiers to find the cable car operator. I was expecting someone Asian. To my surprise, the operator was a Caucasian. Apparently, "Anak" has been his long-time favorite and he assumed that it was a love song crooned in an exotic language.

This, among others, made my trip memorable.

In Geneva, I stayed at the top floor flat of my host, Jem. We had a breathtaking view of the icy pinnacles of Mont Blanc, Europe's loftiest mountain, and the famous Geneva landmark, the Jet d'Eau, an enormous fountain which shoots seven tons of water about 140 meters high.

While Geneva is a small lakeside city that is easy to navigate, it was still a plus to have a French-speaking companion take me around and help translate restaurant menus and signs. Jem and I went to the towns on the opposite side of Lake Geneva (or Lac Léman in French) such as Lausanne, Ouchy, Vevey (hometown of international food company Nestlé, and where Charlie Chaplin decided to live until he passed away), and the "Swiss Riviera" town of Montreux. We took pictures from the lakeside of these towns: a dreamy



background of snowcapped mountains and swans gliding on the misty water.

Visible from almost everywhere is the tower of St. Peter's Cathedral, a gothic 18th century landmark made famous by Protestant reformer John Calvin who shaped most of Geneva's history. As guided tours around the Old Town and a visit to the Patek Philippe Museum pointed out, Calvin's rejection of the Catholic Church's ostentatiousness led to the outlawing of jewelry. The many Protestant immigrants to Geneva who were jewelry craftsmen diverted their precision skills to watchmaking, thus forming the base of what would eventually become the watchmaking center of the world, spawning luxury brands like Rolex, Piaget, Baume & Mercier, Omega, Tissot, Rado, and even the hip Swatch.

Not to miss are the haughty banking citadels on the embankment of the River Rhone which catches the water from Lake Geneva. Super-rich clients from all over the world come here not just to mind their money but

also to relax in Geneva's resort-like ambience.

For food, one can find many Asian stores in Geneva. I was shocked that my total grocery bill exceeded 100 Swiss francs (more than P5,000). One unripe mango, for instance, cost around P500, and a quarter of a squash was about P400.

Somehow, meeting new friends was not difficult. Antonio, a Portuguese, took me to nearby Nyon and Gruyères, producer of the famous cheese brand, Gruyère. Cows are milked at least twice a day and they graze on green-carpeted hills.

Antonio drove me around half of the entire country in just one day, thanks to the motorways where cars run no slower than 125 miles per hour. Hopping from one German part of Switzerland to the next, our tour included Bern, the capital, moving to scenic Thun, then to Interlaken, the adventure capital, and to Lucern (sometimes spelled Luzern or Lucerne). Some signs are in three languages: English, French, and German.

Switzerland, a confederation of independent cantons from neighboring France, Germany, and Italy, wanted to stay neutral during World War II. In recognition of the independence of each canton, no national language has been declared up to now.

I wanted to explore more of the German and Italian areas, so I bought a four-day Swiss Pass costing 250 Swiss francs (around P10,000). It entitled me to unlimited use of all kinds of transportation—bus, boat, train—around the country. I especially loved the train rides because some routes traversed the scenic Alps and small wine-growing villages. Sometimes the tracks' slope would be as steep as 45 degrees.

My favorite was Lucern, which embodies the storybook image of a Swiss town: narrow cobblestone streets, slender spires and towers, covered bridges, frescoed houses, and fountains.

My last stop was the Swiss-Italian town of Lugano. I joined a trip to Gandria, one of the tiniest villages I've ever seen, perched on a ridge and where houses are piled next to each other, bordering the lake.

Lugano is different from the rest of Switzerland because it seemed that the people smiled more and talked louder, and the food choices seemed livelier. Fernando, an Italian I shared a 20-minute funicular ride with, was exhibit A. Before we parted ways following our descent from the peak of Mt. San Salvatore, he turned to me, held my hand, looked straight into my eyes and said, "I will never forget you. You will be always in my heart."

Fernando was just expressing how I felt about my Switzerland vacation. ■

WHAT IF THE GAIJIN IS RIGHT?

This book is full of anger—but don't dismiss it

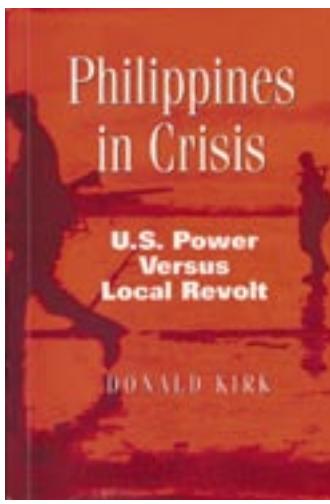
By PATRICIO N. ABINALES

THE RECENT give-and-take between former President Fidel Ramos and Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago during a Senate hearing serves as good reminder of what Donald Kirk wants us not to forget: that the Ramos presidency was as much an era of widespread corruption as it was an age of reform.

This strangely-titled book is a scathing attack on the Ramos era. The author, a journalist, finds one corrupt practice after another, from the systematic looting of Clark Air base even as Mt. Pinatubo was erupting, to the so-called lahar scam where monies allotted to build dikes to divert the volcano's ash flows went to local politicians' pockets.

Kirk spares no one. Gen. Leopoldo Acot, then Clark Philippine commander, is practically accused of overseeing the pillage of the base, with the blessing and involvement of his boss Air Force Commander Gen. Loven Abadia. Unnamed American military personnel were equally to blame, filing false claims and getting their government to reimburse them more than what they really lost. When the media started reporting about the pilferage, a scapegoat was found. Capt. Chen Almacen, an Igorot who migrated to the US and came back as one of the base guards, was subjected to court martial proceedings in Guam on the charge of being involved in the looting, an accusation that was full of holes but which was nevertheless pursued to protect the real culprits while providing good publicity for both Americans and Filipinos.

From Clark, Kirk moves to Olongapo, describing Kate and Richard Gordon and their *bete noir*, the Columban priest Shay Cullen, as spitting images of one another—ambitious personalities interested more in promoting their political careers than really helping their constituents. He writes about Danding Cojuangco's move to Negros, which he describes as the result of a mutual agreement between him and his cousins from the Cory Aquino camp to leave Tarlac politics. Danding, however, is treated with kid's gloves. For reasons unsure, Kirk



Philippines in Crisis: US Power Versus Local Revolt

By Donald Kirk
Anvil, 2005, P200

**A SCATHING ATTACK
ON THE RAMOS
ERA, IT MAKES US
TAKE A SECOND
LOOK AT A HIGH
POINT OF POST-
MARCOS POLITICS**

loses the energetic inquisitiveness and critical eye that he displayed when exposing the duplicities in Angeles and Olongapo.

In Manila, Kirk vividly describes extremes of urban life—from the shacks of Tondo, where people live on a mountain of garbage or along foul-smelling canals, to the gated villages of the rich, protected by walls of barbed wire, glass shards, and mean-looking private security guards. He is rightfully disdainful of the wealthy and their golden ghettos, which function as a physical wall and a social barrier to protect and segregate them from the poor millions.

The book includes a largely superficial treatment of the Muslim and communist rebellions.

While Kirk was able to gain access to such documents as the Communist Party of the Philippines' *Red Book*, a badly organized compilation of the different ideological tendencies within the party after EDSA 2, he seems unable to think many of these tracts through.

The book is full of Kirk's anger: over nationalists who brag of having finally kicked



FIDEL V. RAMOS

out the Americans, but who did nothing to preserve what the two US military bases had installed in the Philippines; over a betrayal of the democratic promises of 1986; over all kinds of Filipinos—military officials, communists, Muslim rebels, politicians, businessmen—being sucked into a world of rackets and sleaze.

This portrait also serves as a warning to American policymakers who have once again embarked on another global war in which the Philippines is a

major combat zone. A former correspondent of the defunct *Washington Star*, Kirk saw the folly of US intervention in Vietnam, particularly its backing of the corrupt South Vietnamese regime. He sees the same pattern being revived in the current war on terror in the Philippines. Washington seems unable to learn from its past. But will it listen to a citizen's admonitions from afar?

Critics—especially nationalists who will not like Kirk's unpleasant description of them—may dismiss his book as the ranting of an American who missed the glory days of neo-colonial rule. But this may not be an entirely accurate picture. For there is a basis for the anger—books by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism on Ramos had confirmed the pervasiveness of corruption during that period. More importantly, one senses a genuine affection for the Philippines and ordinary Filipinos, a sentiment arising perhaps from the author's personal ties with non-elite Filipinos.

The book can sometimes be obsessive in its bitterness and a tad patronizing in its description of Filipinos in general. But what it says should also make us take a second look at a time which people in politics today refer to as the high point of post-Marcos politics. ■

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SECRET NANNIES

Filipinas married to Egyptians work as housekeepers and risk disapproval of their husbands

By MICHAELA CABRERA in Cairo

UNLIKE ITS neighbors in the Gulf, Egypt struggles with staggering poverty, its unemployment rate at 12 percent in 2005. Yet the country is a magnet to Filipina domestic helpers, who find high-paying jobs in the households of wealthy Egyptians and diplomats.

They are paid anywhere from US\$200 to \$1,000 a month, thanks to a reputation of being the most diligent and the best in cleanliness. But this reputation does not serve well the Filipinas who came to Egypt not for money but for love.

After marrying Egyptian workers in countries like the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, or Kuwait, they settled in Egypt, where they hoped to get employed. But the jobs these Filipinas are eligible for—like teaching, hotel attendance, and sales—pay only from \$25 to \$200 a month, much less than they could earn as nannies.

Despite the disapproval of their husbands and in-laws, they choose to toil as housekeepers—even if it means keeping their jobs a secret.

Fatima Tablizo-Atteya met her husband in Saudi Arabia, where he rescued her after she ran away from her employers. They came to Egypt in 1999, and Hussein later opened a café and an aqua filter station. With his mother and sister controlling his finances, Fatima was left with a weekly allowance of only 25 Egyptian pounds (equivalent to about \$4) for food and other groceries.

"I want to buy some new clothes," she says. For three-month durations, Fatima did part-time work as a cleaning lady for various diplomats, earning about \$9 daily, but her husband objected.

"He hired a detective to follow me, he



Tess Lara Al Qasid with her daughters and an American friend

didn't want me to work as a maid. So I just said I babysit," she says. Somehow, 'babysitter' is more palatable than 'cleaning lady,' which was Fatima's actual job. Anyhow, her husband was displeased and regarded Fatima with less respect.

"He would slap me, hit me against the wall. He once told me I looked like a monkey. He said *enta zibala* (you are garbage)," she narrates.

"We don't have sex anymore," Fatima confides. "I don't know why he just won't divorce me." Now she focuses on rearing her seven-year-old son, and once in a while contemplates finding a job and leaving her husband.

But without savings and with her self-esteem gradually dissipating, she is stuck at home tolerating his insults and infidelity.

Laila Ahmad met her husband Mohamed in Baguio, where he studied dentistry. They migrated to Egypt in 1992, and like Fatima, she has had to lie about working as a nanny.

A degree holder in nursing and computer science, Laila worked as a teacher and then as a personal nurse in Cairo. But the nursery school paid only \$200 a month, and the elderly scientist she did nursing duties for eventually died.

Fortunately, her work in the nursery school gave her connections to foreigners who were looking for Filipino maids. With the potential of earning at least \$800 monthly from a British and an Egyptian couple, Laila decided to take on part-time babysitting jobs.

"My husband and his family don't like this kind of job because it offends their dignity. Other people might say, 'He's a dentist, why is his wife a maid?'" Laila says. So she tells her husband that she tutors foreign children.

It's not a big lie, according to Laila, because what she does goes beyond mere babysitting. "I play with the children—we

color, we sing. I don't just feed and bathe them," she says. "This work is *halal* (legitimate in Islam, to which Laila converted). I don't care about its status. What's important is that I'm happy with my salary."

Ultimately, she wants to build a secure future for her two children. She says, "I've been through hardships, laboring in rice fields and selling scrap wood in markets. I don't want them to experience this."

Tess Lara Al Qasid, who married an Egyptian she met in Abu Dhabi, took the opposite route. She recently quit her part-time job as a nanny of a Belgian-Polish child to become a kindergarten teacher. She has accepted that being a maid will always be looked down upon.

"My daughter asked me, 'Mommy, why are you cleaning? You told me you're a teacher,'" she recounts. Though she earns only \$200 monthly from teaching, the work hours are less compared to babysitting, and she can spend more time with her seven-year-old and three-year-old.

"A white collar job is a white collar job. Anywhere I go, I can write it on my CV (curriculum vitae). I can't write that I'm a maid on my CV," she reasons. Tess also hopes that a few years' experience teaching in kindergarten will open doors to more prestigious institutions, where salaries can reach as much as \$600 monthly.

Struggling against a male-dominated, class-conscious culture, Filipina domestic helpers face discrimination on the basis of their gender and their job. As wives of Egyptians who must please not only their husbands but also their in-laws, they are made to choose between being dependent and being denigrated. For some, masking the truth while earning extra money is already a happy compromise. ■



Seductive Desserts

AS DEDICATED shoppers know, Tiendesitas is Pasig City's newest mall. It is a showcase of some of the best Philippine products. The mall houses 12 Maranao architecture-inspired, open-air pavilions called "villages."

The desserts are located at the Food Village pavilion. Two separate rows of Filipino dessert outlets flank the traditional Filipino food eateries on each side. As far as I know, this dessert food setup is unique among the metropolis' malls.

The first time I went to dessert row was to look for coffee and I found Kalinga Gold (P30) among other blends such as Kanlaon and Malaybalay brews at The Charcoal Roaster Coffee place. Chocolate brews are also available.

Before I knew it, I was traveling towards Tita Lynn's Suman. The *suman* is a glutinous rice-based cake wrapped in banana

leaves. The *sumans* here are mainly *suman sa lhiya* or lye (with grated coconut) and *suman sa ibus* (with coconut milk).

I had *suman* with *ube* mixture (P25), which I picked from other seductions such as *suman* mixed with *langka*, *macapuno*, coconut, and chocolate *suman*. *Ube* or yam is said to be the most expensive tuber crop in the country.

On my next visit, I went straight to Wado's, which serves *bibingka*, *puto bumbong*, and *halo-halo*. I ordered *bibingka* (P40), which was delicious with coffee. *Bibingka* is a round and flat, glutinous rice-based mixture of cheese, egg, salt, sugar, and coconut milk. The mixture is cooked in a cake tin lined with banana leaves on live charcoals. *Bibingka* fans say that it is well cooked when there is a proper balance between live charcoal heat from above and below.

On my next visit I will go to Bartanella's, which serves a number of cakes including a playfully-named Better-Dan-Sex chocolate mousse (P70). There are other "sexy" places. One is Pan de Provence, which sounds very French but whose signature offering is freshly baked *pan de sal*!

And then there are fresh fruit juice places such as J&C Fruits, Shanty's, and Chillers. You can have your choice of mango, pineapple, citrus, *saba*, plantain, and others. J&C Fruits is supplied by Nenita Farms.

Or you can go to Llanes, which offers only one item, *buko* or whole young coconut, whose juice is ready for sipping and the meat ready for tasting (P30).

Nutritional value aside, there are deliciously seductive reasons to head for Tiendesitas. —**Frankie Llaguno**

PINOY BLOGS ON DINING AND LIVING

THESE THREE blogs are among the most popular online guides to dining, urban, and urbane living in the local blogosphere. The three writers have different personalities but they all seem to have a flair for finding the latest and newest haunts and happenings in town. It's actually interesting to see their different takes on the same restaurant.

A bit of warning before you continue: reading these blogs has been known to be highly addictive. It is advised that one makes sure he or she has plenty of free time before visiting them.

Dessert Comes First

dessertcomesfirst.blogspot.com

An obsession with dessert and other unabashed opinions of a food writer

Lori Baltazar's blog has earned a reputation for being an excellent source of reliable reviews of the latest dining spots, food finds, sumptuous recipes, and mouthwatering photographs. Find out from her and her readers' comments whether or not that new restaurant is worth trying, or which hotel buffet is best, or how to make the best cheesecake in town.

Our Awesome Planet: Life in Manila

anton.blogs.com

Slice of Manila's Hidden Places. Travel Secrets through Word-of-Mouth. Shared through our Awesome Family Adventures.

The best kept secret sale in town, the first indoor kart racing in the Philippines, the most interesting restaurants to dine in, and places to visit in and out of Manila. IT manager by day and blogger by night, Anton Diaz, has been sharing all these to thousands of readers for a year-and-a-half now to, he says, "showcase the Philippines as a tropical paradise and hopefully inspire people to appreciate our country a little

bit more."

Market Manila

www.marketmanila.com

A guide for the clueless on the hunt for ingredients and local produce, specialty food items, and the occasional recipe. Tips are from the Marketman, a semi-retired "well-traveled management consultant" who professes to simply have a passion for food. He writes that his greatest fear is that his site will have only three hits a day—from his wife, his daughter, and himself. He now knows that fear hasn't been realized.

—**Jet Damazo**

DUE DILIGENCE

OR BETTER yet, it's the lack of it.

Remember the controversial contract that National Security Adviser **Norberto Gonzales Jr.** signed last year with **Venable LLP**, one of America's top law firms? For a one-year fee of US\$ 900,000 (P50 million), the government hired Venable to lobby for the Philippines and "secure grants and [US] congressional earmarks" for President Arroyo's move to amend the Constitution.

Gonzales was forced to testify at the Senate to explain that contract, which came as the government was reeling from a budget deficit. Senators grilled him no end, causing his blood pressure to rise. He was later confined in a hospital.

Of course, everyone knew that Gonzales was just taking the flak for somebody close to the President—the actual contact of Venable who likewise convinced her to approve the deal. But did this somebody conduct due diligence on Venable before recommending the lobby firm to the President? NEWSBREAK learned from a source who saw the documents that Venable had a previous big-time Filipino client before President Arroyo.

That client was no less than the late **Fernando Poe Jr.**, who ran against Ms. Arroyo in the 2004 election. Poe's camp hired Venable to make their candidate acceptable to the US. In fact, the signatory to the contract was one of Poe's campaign managers, **Horacio "Boy" Morales**. ■



NORBERTO GONZALES JR.

UNPREPARED!

INA country of about 7,100 islands, where sea transport of industrial raw materials is common with up to 200 vessels plying different routes at any one time, accidents are nothing new. But previous ones were of a smaller and more manageable scale. Obviously, Petron and the Philippine Coast Guard were not prepared for an oil spill as big as the one in Guimaras.

The Coast Guard has a National Marine Pollution Control Contingency Plan which calls for a tiered response to oil spills. For a Tier 1 spill, the spiller is required to take full responsibility for the clean-up using its own resources. Petron has equipment for an oil spill of this scale because this is only what the law requires.

But Guimaras is a Tier 3 oil spill because of the volume involved and the extent of its potential damage to marine life. The contingency plan calls for the Coast Guard to take charge of coordinating efforts to address it.

The Coast Guard has limited resources since its equipment stockpile in Manila

was destroyed in a fire in 1992. It is dependent on regional and bilateral agreements on oil spill response. The skimmers, booms, storage tanks, vessel-based dispersant sprayers, transfer pumps, among others, that it is using for the clean-up operations are from the Japanese transport ministry through a scheme called "Oil Spill Preparedness and Response in Asia."

The only ones in the country who have access to additional and more suitable equipment are Petron's competitors, Shell and Caltex. The two have established a cooperative called Waterborne Industry Oil Spill Equipment (wise) which has containment and recovery equipment, storage facilities, and pressure cleaners on their board tugs.

Prior to the Guimaras disaster, Petron, for unclear reasons, was not a member of wise. Petron, however, has been citing wise

as the source of most of its equipment for the ongoing clean-up.

This was perhaps why crisis management at the onset was concentrated on knocking on the doors of competitors. Thus, Petron was unable to present its plans and activities immediately after the oil spill. A deadly oversight. ■



PHOTOGRAPHS—PAUL MATA (GONZALES); JOE HARESH TANODRA (GUIMARAS)

INDISCRETION

AS PART of his public persona, this lawmaker projects an immaculate image: a doting father and a loving husband who juggles domestic duties and professional obligations with grace.

But he keeps a secret that could surface as the election next year nears. Already, it seems the cat is out of the bag and the dirty tricks departments of his rivals have started to do some sniffing.

This secret could shatter his image. We don't know how voters would take the lawmaker's indiscretion (read: extramarital affair) but he could probably take refuge in the fact that it hardly affected the candidacy of one presidential candidate when he faced the same publicity nightmare.

But then again, the presidential candidate enjoyed a near mythical status, something that the re-electionist lawmaker does not have. ■

DISAPPEARING ACT

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman likes to say it is actively building constituents for its anti-corruption programs. It's one of their main tasks, officials declare.

But what happened at a recent event didn't show it. It appears that either officials are paying only lip service or are afraid to answer tough questions.

Orlando Casimiro, the newly-promoted overall ombudsman, was invited

to speak at a workshop on red tape and corruption sponsored by big business, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the American Chamber of Commerce. The audience consisted of members of these organizations. Among the other speakers were the World Bank country director and head of Transparency International in the Philippines.

Casimiro arrived just in time for his panel. He was made to speak first because he said he was

in a rush as he had to be at the Supreme Court to take his oath as overall ombudsman. He read his speech, rarely making any eye contact with the audience—and left immediately.

What's puzzling is why the Ombudsman didn't send another official to represent the office, one who had the time to spend with a sector that is an important ally in preventing corruption. ■

WHO IS SAM?

NEWSBREAK GOT hold of a copy of Samson "Sam" Macariola's 258-page book, "Basic Technical Facts About Firearms and Ammunition." By this time, many must know that Macariola is the supposed anti-terror expert who claimed he tested our airports in Davao and Manila.

What makes him an "expert"? Here's what we gathered from his book. Macariola's interest in firearms started since childhood. "At age 14, he started learning how an air gun works. His father owned a small machine shop and it was here that he started to learn gunsmithing."

In 1989, he started his research on ammunition. He later worked as firearms and ammunition consultant and personnel trainer for private firearm dealers in the Philippines. He also trained law enforcement officers in some parts of the country on the basics of firearms and ammunition.

The note on the author says Macariola "is a very friendly and approachable person, most especially when it comes to helping people by means of sharing his knowledge in his field. He is dedicated in educating people regarding the safe and proper use of firearms and ammunition."

That's what probably led him to the *Inquirer*: his desire to share his knowhow. ■



EUGENIO CEDO

JULIE ALIPALA

A GENERAL'S MANNERS

THE COMMANDER of the newly-activated Western Mindanao Command (WESTMINCOM), Maj. Gen. **Eugenio Cedo**, needs a crash course on good manners and right conduct.

In full view of government officials and journalists, Cedo berated a colonel because he didn't like how the latter handled media interviews on the military's war on terror. This happened during the launch of a livelihood program for 78 battle-tested soldiers and cops. Cedo shooed out the reporters because he was not yet done berating the officer, Col. **Susthenes Valcorza**, who happens to be the Civil Relations Group chief.

It appears that the colonel erred in giving information; he was quite open with the media. He was forced to retract his statement, because as Cedo claimed, President Arroyo called him and criticized him for what the colonel said. Later, the colonel apologized for the incident.

Here are excerpts from the transcript:

Reporter to Valcorza: Sir, you made mention [that] an intel unit of the military was able to intercept a conversation or call between **Abu Sulaiman** and a member of the media?

Col Valcorza: Yes, based on the interception, the most critical were their plans, part of their offensive on September 11. I'd like to call on all Filipinos to unite against terrorists. We can't discount the possibility of bombings, kidnappings.

After the news report on ANC came out, the WESTMINCOM clarified that it has no capability to "intercept and monitor phone conversations." Valcorza was misquoted. The confusion may have stemmed from the words "intercept and monitor," Valcorza said. Yes, the military received information about the conversation, but from reports of concerned citizens, he stressed. ■

Magandang araw mula sa San Miguel

Sa pagsikap, natutupad ang maraming pangarap. Alam ng San Miguel ito.

Kaya naman sinisikap nito na gawing mas masarap, mas maginhawa at bawat araw.

Ibinataguyod ang mga programang nakahulutlong sa pagpapainkaid ng buhay at kabuhayan. Tolad ng "Operation Unis Taal" sa Batangas na nangangataya sa kalusugan ng mga isda doon. At ang "Tulong-tulong sa Tullahan" na muling bimibuhay ang Tullahan River para sa kapakanan ng mga taga-Malabon at Valenzuela. At siyempre, mahusay na gumagawa ang San Miguel Corporation ng mga de-kalidad at abot-kayang mga produkto para sa bawat Pilipino.



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